THE

LIFE OF RICHARD COBDEN



R. Cobden

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OF

RICHARD COBDEN

BY

JOHN MORLEY

BARRISTER-AT-LAW; M.A. OXFORD; HON. LL.D. GLASGOW.

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TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

JOHN BRIGHT

THIS MEMOIR

OF HIS CLOSE COMRADE

IN THE CAUSE OF WISE JUST AND SEDATE GOVERNMENT

IS INSCRIBED

WITH THE WRITER'S SINCERE RESPECT.

PREFACE.

OWING to various circumstances, with which I have no right to trouble the reader, the publication of these volumes has been delayed considerably beyond the date at which I hoped to bring them to an end. As things have turned out, the delay has done no harm. My memoir of Mr. Cobden appears at a moment when there is a certain disposition in men's minds to subject his work and his principles to a more hostile criticism than they have hitherto encountered. So far perhaps it is permitted to me to hope that the book will prove opportune. It is possible, however, that it may disappoint those who expect to find in it a completely furnished armoury for the champions of Free Trade. I did not conceive it to be my task to compile a polemical handbook for that controversy. For this the reader must always go to the parliamentary debates between 1840 and 1846, and to the manuals of Political Economy.

It will perhaps be thought that I should have done better to say nothing of Mr. Cobden's private affairs.

In the ordinary case of a public man, reserve on these matters is possibly a good rule. In the present instance, so much publicity was given to Mr. Cobden's affairs—some of it of a very malicious kind—that it seemed best, not only to the writer, but to those whose feelings he was bound first and exclusively to consider, to let these take their place along with the other facts of his life.

The material for the biography has been supplied in great abundance by Mr. Cobden's many friends and correspondents. His family with generous confidence entrusted it to my uncontrolled discretion, and for any lack of skill or judgment that may appear in the way in which the materials have been handled, the responsibility is not theirs but mine. Much of the correspondence had been already sifted and arranged by Mr. Henry Richard, the respected Member for Merthyr, who handed over to me the result of his labour with a courtesy and good-will for which I am particularly indebted to him. Lord Cardwell was obliging enough to procure for me Mr. Cobden's letter to Sir Robert Peel (vol. i. ch. 17), and, along with Lord Hardinge, to give me permission to print Sir Robert Peel's reply. Mr. Bright, with an unwearied kindness for which I can never be too grateful, has allowed me to consult him constantly, and has abounded in helpful corrections and suggestions while the sheets were passing through the press. Nor can I forget to express the many obligations that

I owe to my friend, Sir Louis Mallet. It was he who first induced me to undertake a piece of work which he had much at heart, and he has followed it with an attention, an interest, and a readiness in counsel and information, of which I cannot but fear that the final product gives a very inadequate idea.

J. M.

September 29th, 1881.

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THE LIFE OF RICHARD COBDEN.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY LIFE.

Heyshott is a hamlet in a sequestered corner of West Sussex, not many miles from the Hampshire border. It is one of the crests that, like wooded islands, dot the great Valley of the Weald. Near at hand the red housetops of Midhurst sleep among the trees, while Chichester lies in the flats a dozen miles away, beyond the steep escarpments of the South Downs, that here are nearing their western edge. Heyshott has a high rolling upland of its own, part of the majestic wall that runs from Beachy Head almost to Portsmouth. As the traveller ascends the little neighbouring height of West Lavington, he discerns far off to the left, at the end of a dim line, the dark clump of sentinel trees at Chanctonbury, whence one may look forth over the glistening flood of the Channel, or hear the waters beat upon the shore. The country around Midhurst is sprinkled thinly with farms and modest homesteads. Patches of dark forest mingle with green spaces of common, with wide reaches of heath, with ponds flashing in the sunlight, and with the white or yellow clearing of the fallows. The swelling turf of the headland, looking northward across the Weald to the loved companion downs of Surrey, is broken by soft wooded

1804 hollows, where the shepherd finds a shelter from the noontide sun, or from the showers that are borne along in the driving flight of the south-west wind.

Here, in an old farmhouse, known as Dunford, Richard Cobden was born on June 3, 1804. He was the fourth of a family of eleven children. His ancestors were yeomen of the soil, and it is said, with every appearance of truth, that the name can be traced in the annals of the district as far back as the fourteenth century. The antiquarians of the county have found out that one Adam de Coppdene was sent to parliament by the borough of Chichester in 1314. There is talk of a manor of Cobden in the ninth of Edward IV. (1470). In 1562 there is a record of William Cobden devising lands on the downs in Westdean. Thomas Cobden of Midhurst was a contributor of twenty-five pounds to the fund raised for resisting the Spanish Armada. When hearth-money was levied in 1670, Richard Cobden, junior, is entered as paying for seven out of the seventy-six hearths of the district. In the Sussex election poll-book for 1734 a later Richard Cobden is put down as a voter for the parish of Midhurst, and four or five others are entered as freeholders in other parts of West Sussex. The best opinion seems to be that the settlement of the Cobdens at Midhurst took place sometime in the seventeenth century, and that they were lineal descendants of Sir Adam and Sir Ralph of former ages.

However all this may be, the five hundred years that intervened had nursed no great prosperity. Cobden's grandfather and namesake was a maltster and farmer, and filled for several years the principal office of bailiff for the borough of Midhurst. When he died in 1809, he left a very modest property behind him. Dunford was sold, and William Cobden, the only son of Richard the elder, and the father of the Richard Cobden with whom we are

concerned, removed to a small farm on the outskirts of Midhurst. He was a man of soft and affectionate disposition, but wholly without the energy of affairs. He was the gentlest and kindest of men. Honest and upright himself, he was incapable of doubting the honesty and uprightness of others. He was cheated without suspecting it, and he had not force of character enough to redeem a fortune which gradually slipped away from him. Poverty oozed in with gentle swiftness, and lay about him like a dull cloak for the rest of his life. His wife, the mother of Richard Cobden, had borne the gracious maiden-name of Millicent Amber. Unlike her kindly helpless husband, she was endowed with native sense, shrewdness, and force of mind, but the bravery of women in such cases can seldom avail against the shiftlessness of men. The economic currents of the time might seem to have been all in their favour. The war and the scarcity which filled all the rest of the country with distress, rained gold upon farmers and landlords. In the five years during which William Cobden was at Guillard's Oak, (1809-13), the average price of wheat was just short of five pounds a quarter. In spite of tithes, of war-taxes, and of tremendous poor-rates, the landowners extracted royal rents, and the farmers drove a roaring trade. To what use William Cobden put these good times, we do not know. After the harvest of 1813, the prospect of peace came, and with it a collapse of the artificial inflation of the grain markets. Insolvency and distraint became familiar words in the farmhouses that a few months before had been revelling in plenty. 1809-13.

William Cobden was not the man to contrive an escape from financial disaster. In 1814 the farm was sold, and they moved from home to home until at length they made a settlement at Westmeon, near Alton in Hampshire. His neighbours were as unfortunate as himself, for Cobden was able to say in later years that when he returned to his native

1814-19. Æt. 10-15. place, he found that many of those who were once his play-fellows had sunk down to the rank of labourers, and some of them were even working on the roads.

It is one of the privileges of strength to add to its own the burdens of the weak, and helpful kinsfolk are constantly found for those whom character or outer circumstance has submerged. Relatives of his own, or his wife's, charged themselves with the maintenance of William Cobden's dozen children. Richard, less happy than the others, was taken away from a dame's school at Midhurst, and cheerful tending of the sheep on his father's farm, and was sent by his mother's brother-in-law, a merchant in London, to a school in Yorkshire. Here he remained for five years, a grim and desolate time, of which he could never afterwards endure to speak. This was twenty years before the vivid genius and racy style of Dickens had made the ferocious brutalities of Squeers and the horrors of Dotheboys Hall as universally familiar as the best-known scenes of Shakespeare. The unfortunate boy from his tenth to his fifteenth year was ill fed, ill taught, ill used; he never saw parent or friend; and once in each quarter he was allowed such singular relief to his feelings as finds official expression in the following letter (March 25, 1817):—

"Honoured Parents,

"You cannot tell what rapture I feel at my once more having the pleasure of addressing my Parents, and though the distance is so great, yet I have an opportunity of conveying it to you free of expense. It is now turned three years since our separation took place, and I assure you I look back with more pleasure to that period than to any other part of my life which was spent to no effectual purpose, and I beg to return you my most sincere thanks as being the means of my gaining such a sense of learning as will enable

me to gain a genteel livelihood whenever I am called into the world to do for myself." 1819-25. ÆT. 15-21.

It was not until 1819 that this cruel and disgusting mockery of an education came to an end. Cobden was received as a clerk in his uncle's warehouse in Old Change. It was some time before things here ran easily. Nothing is harder to manage, on either side, than the sense of an obligation conferred or received. Cobden's uncle and aunt expected servility in the place of gratitude, and in his own phrase, "inflicted rather than bestowed their bounties." They especially disapproved of his learning French lessons in the early hours of the morning in his bedroom, and his fondness for book-knowledge was thought of evil omen for his future as a man of business. The position became so unpleasant, that in 1822 Cobden accepted the offer of a situation in a house of business at Ghent. It promised considerable advantages, but his father would not give his approval, and Cobden after some demur fell in with his father's wish. He remained where he was, and did not quarrel with such opportunity as he had, simply because he had missed a better. It is one of the familiar puzzles of life, that those whose want of energy has sunk their lives in failure, are often so eager to check and disparage the energy of stronger natures than their own.

William Cobden's letters all breathe a soft domesticity which is more French than English, and the only real discomfort of his poverty to him seems to have been a weak regret that he could not have his family constantly around his hearth. Frederick, his eldest son, was in the United States for several years; his father was always gently importunate for his return. In 1824 he came home, having done nothing by his travels towards bettering fortunes that remained stubbornly unprosperous to the end

1824. of his life. Between Frederick Cobden and Richard there
ÆT. 20. always existed the warmest friendship, and when the former found a situation in London, their intercourse was constant and intimate. There were three younger brothers, Charles, Miles, and Henry; and Richard Cobden was no sooner in receipt of a salary, than he at once took the place of a father to them, besides doing all that he could to brighten the shabby poverty of the home at Westmeon. Whenever he had a holiday, he spent it there; a hamper of such good cheer as his purse could afford was never missing at Christmas; and on the long Sundays in summer he knew no happier diversion than to walk out to meet his father at some roadside inn on the wide Surrey heaths, midway between Alton and the great city. His little parchment-bound diary of expenses at this time shows him to us as learning to dance and to box, playing cards with alternating loss and gain, going now and again to Vauxhall Gardens, visiting the theatre to see Charles Mathews, buying Brougham on Popular Education, Franklin's Essays, and Childe Harold. The sums are puny enough, but a gentle spirit seems still to breathe in the poor faded lines and quaint French in which he made his entries, as we read of the little gifts to his father and brothers, and how he is debtor by *charité*, 1*s.* —*donné un pauvre garçon*, 1*d.*—*un pauvre garçon*, 2*d.* By-and-by the sombre Shadow fell upon them all. In 1825 the good mother of the house helped to nurse a neighbour's sick child, in the midst of an epidemic of typhoid; she caught the fever, and died at the age of eight and forty. "Our sorrow would be torment," Frederick Cobden wrote to his father, "if we could not reflect on our conduct towards that dear soul, without calling to mind one instance in which we had wilfully given her pain." And with this gentle solace they seem to have had good right to soothe their affliction.

The same year which struck Cobden this distressing blow, brought him promotion in his business. The early differences between himself and his uncle had been smoothed away by his industry, cheerfulness, and skill, and he had won the approval and good-will of his employers. From the drudgery of the warehouse, he was now advanced to the glories of the road. We may smile at the keen elation with which he looked to this preferment from the position of clerk to that of traveller; but human dignities are only relative, and a rise in the hierarchy of trade is doubtless as good matter for exultation, as a rise in hierarchies more elaborately robed. Cobden's new position was peculiarly suited to the turn of his character. Collecting accounts and soliciting orders for muslins and calicoes gave room in their humble sphere for those high inborn qualities of energy, and sociability, which in later years produced the most active and the most persuasive of popular statesmen. But what made the life of a traveller so specially welcome to Cobden, was the gratification that it offered to the master-passion of his life, an insatiable desire to know the affairs of the world. Famous men, who became his friends in the years to come, agree in the admission that they have never known a man in whom this trait of a sound and rational desire to know and to learn was so strong and so inexhaustible. It was not the curiosity of the infantile dabbler in all subjects, random and superficial; and yet it was as far removed from the dry parade of the mere tabulist and statistician. It was not bookish, for Cobden always felt that much of what is best worth knowing is never written in books. Nor was it the curiosity of a speculative understanding; yet, as we shall see presently, there soon grew up in his mind a body of theoretic principles, and a philosophic conception of modern society, round which the knowledge so strenuously sought was habitually grouped, and

1825.
ÆT. 21.

1825. by which the desire to learn was gradually directed and
ÆT. 21. configured.

The information to be gathered in coaches and in the commercial rooms of provincial hotels was narrow enough in some senses, but it was varied, fresh, and in real matter. To a man of Cobden's active and independent intelligence this contact with such a diversity of interest and character was a congenial process of education. Harsh circumstance had left no other education open to him. There is something pathetic in an exclamation of one of his letters of this period, not merely because it concerns a man of Cobden's eminence and public service, but because it is the case of thousands of less conspicuous figures. In his first journey (August—October, 1825) he was compelled to wait for half a day at Shrewsbury, for a coach to Manchester. He went to the abbey, and was greatly impressed by its venerable walls and painted glass. "Oh that I had money," he says to his brother, in plain uncultured speech, "to be deep skilled in the mysteries of mullions and architraves, in lieu of black and purple and pin grounds! How happy I should be." He felt as keenly as Byron himself how

> The lore
> Of mighty minds doth hallow in the core
> Of human hearts the ruin of a wall,
> Where dwelt the wise and wondrous.

1826. In his second journey he visited the birthplace of Robert Burns, and he wrote to his brother from Aberdeen (Feb. 5, 1826) :—"It is a sort of gratification that I am sure you can imagine, but which I cannot describe, to feel conscious of treading upon the same spot of earth, of viewing the same surrounding objects, and of being sheltered by the same roof, as one who equally astonished and delighted the world." He describes himself as boiling over with enthusiasm upon approaching "Alloway's auld haunted kirk," the brig o'

Doon, and the scene of Tam o' Shanter's headlong ride. With a pang of disillusion he found the church so small that Cuttie-Sark and her hellish legion can have had scanty space for their capering, while the distance to the middle of the old bridge, and the length of the furious immortal chase, can have been no more than one hundred yards. The party on this occasion were accompanied by a small manufacturer from Paisley, who cared little for the genius of the place, and found Cobden's spirit of hero-worship tiresome. "Our worthy Paisley friend remarked to us, as we leaned over the Bridge of Doon, and as its impetuous stream rushed beneath us, 'How shamefully,' said he, 'is the water-power of this country suffered to run to waste: here is the force of twenty horses running completely idle.' He did not relish groping among ruins and tombstones at midnight, and was particularly solicitous that we should leave matters of discussion until we reached Burns's birthplace, where he understood that they kept the best whiskey in that vicinity." To Burns's birthplace at length they came, where at first their reception was not cordial. "But my worthy friend from Paisley had not forgotten the whiskey; and so, tapping the chin of the old dame with his forefinger, he bade her bring a half-mutchkin of the best, 'to set the wheels going,' as he termed it, and, having poured out a glass for the hostess, which she swallowed, I was pleased to find that it did set the wheels of her tongue going. 'Ye would maybe like to gang and see the verra spot where poor Robbie was borned,' she said, and we instantly begged her to show it to us. She took us along a very short passage, and into a decent-looking kitchen with a good fire. There was a curtain hung from the ceiling to the floor, which appeared to cover one part of the wall. She drew aside the curtain, and it disclosed a bed in a recess of the wall, and a man who had been hidden in the clothes first put his head out and looked round in

1826. stupid amazement, and then rose up in the bed and ex-
ÆT. 22. claimed, 'What the deil hae ye got here, Lizzie?' 'Whisht, whisht, gudeman!' said the old dame, out of whose head the whiskey had driven all thoughts of her husband, 'the gentlemen will be verra pleased to hear ye tell them a' about poor Robbie.' Our Paisley friend had again poured out a glass of whiskey and presented it to our host, who drank it off, and, bringing his elbow round with a knowing flourish, he returned the glass upside down, to show he drank clean. 'I knew Robbie weel,' said he, wiping his mouth with his shirt-sleeve. 'I was the last man that drank wi' him afore he left this country for Dumfries. Oh, he was a bonnie bairn, but owre muckle gien to braw company.' 'And this is the spot, gentlemen,' said the impatient gudewife, catching the narrative from her husband, 'where Robbie was borned, and sic a night that was, as I have heard Nancy Miller, the coachman's mither say; it blew, and rained, and thundered, just like as if heaven and earth were dinged thegither, and ae corner of the house was blawn away afore the morning, and so they removed the mither and the bairn into the next room the day after.' Now I believe if these two bodies were put upon their oath to all they told us, that they would not be guilty of falsehood or perjury, for I am quite sure they are both persuaded that their tale is true, and from no other cause than that they have told it so often. And yet I would venture to bet all I possess, and what is more, *all I owe*, that they never saw Burns in all their lives."[1]

The genial eye for character and the good-humoured tolerance of foibles, which so singularly distinguished Cobden in the days when he came to act with men for public objects, are conspicuous in these early letters. His hospi-

[1] *To F. Cobden*, Feb. 5, 1826.

table observation, even in this rudimentary stage, seemed 1825.
to embrace all smaller matters as well as great. Though ÆT. 21.
he was little more than one and twenty, he had already a sense for those great facts of society which are so much more important than landscape and the picturesque, whether in books or travels, yet for which the eye and thought of adolescence are usually trained to be so dull. On his first journey in Ireland (September, 1825), he notices how immediately after the traveller leaves Dublin "you are reminded by the miserable tenements in the roadside that you are in the land of poverty, ignorance, and misrule. Although my route afforded a favourable specimen of the Irish peasantry, it was a sight truly heartrending. There appears to be no middle class in Ireland: there are the rich, and those who are objects of wretchedness and almost starvation. We passed through some collections of huts called towns, where I observed the pig taking his food in the same room with the family, and where I am told he is always allowed to sleep. Shoes and stockings are luxuries that neither men nor women often aspire to. Their cabins are made of mud or sometimes stone. I observed many without any glass, and they rarely contain more than one room, which answers the purpose of sitting-room and sleeping-room for themselves and their pig."

Even in Dublin itself he saw what made an impression upon him, which ten years later he tried to convey to the readers of his first pamphlet. "The river Liffey intersects the city, and ships of 200 tons may anchor nearly in the heart of Dublin; but it is here the stranger is alone disappointed; the small number of shipping betrays their limited commerce. It is melancholy to see their spacious streets (into some of which the whole tide of Cheapside might with ease move to and fro), with scarcely a vehicle through their whole extent. Whilst there is so little circulation in

1826. ÆT. 22. the heart, can it be wondered at that the extremities are poor and destitute?"[1]

If one side of Cobden's active and flexible mind was interested by these miserable scenes, another side, as we have said, was touched by the strange whimsicalities of man. In February, 1826, he crossed from Donaghadee, on the north-east coast of Ireland, to Portpatrick.

"Our captain was named Paschal—he was a short figure, but made the most of a little matter by strutting as upright as a dart, and throwing back his head, and putting forward his little chest in an attitude of defiance. It appeared to be the ambition of our little commander to make matters on board his little dirty steam-boat wear the same air of magnitude as on board a seventy-four. I afterwards learned he had once been captain on board of a king's ship. His orders were all given through a ponderous trumpet, although his three men could not be more than ten yards distant from him. Still he bore the air of a gentleman, and was accustomed to have the fullest deference paid him by his three seamen. On approaching near the Harbour of Portpatrick, our captain put his huge trumpet down the hole that led below, and roared out, at the risk of stunning us all, 'Steward-boy, bring up a gun cartridge, and have a care you don't take a candle into the *Magazine!*' The order was obeyed, the powder was carried up, and after a huge deal of preparation and bustling to and fro on the deck, the trumpet was again poked down to a level with our ears, and the steward was again summoned to bring up a match. Soon after which we heard the report of something upon deck like the sound of a duck-gun. After that, the order was given, 'All hands to the larboard—clear the gangway and lower the larboard steps,' or in other words, 'Help the passengers to step on to the pier.'"[2]

[1] *To F. Cobden*, Sept. 20, 1825.

[2] *To F. Cobden.*

In the same letter he congratulates himself on having been fortunate enough, when he strolled into the Court of Session, to see Jeffery, Cockburn, and Sir Walter Scott. One cannot pass the mention of the last and greatest of the three—the bravest, soundest-hearted, and most lovable of men,—without noting that this day, when Cobden saw him, was only removed by three weeks from "that awful seventeenth of January," when Scott received the staggering blow of desperate and irretrievable ruin. It was only ten days before that he had gone to the Court for the first time, "and like the man with the large nose, thought that everybody was thinking of him and his mishaps."

This, in fact, was the hour of one of the most widely disastrous of those financial crashes which sweep over the country from time to time like great periodic storms. The ruin of 1825 and 1826 was never forgotten by those who had intelligence enough to be alive to what was going on before their eyes. The whirlwind that shook the fabric of Scott's prosperity to the ground, involved Cobden's humbler fortunes in a less imposing catastrophe. His employers failed (February, 1826), as did so many thousands of others, and he was obliged to spend some time in unwelcome holiday at Westmeon.

Affairs were as straitened under his father's roof as they had always been. The sun was not likely to be shining in that little particular spot, if the general sky were dull. The perturbations of the great ocean were felt even in that small circle, and while retail customers at their modest shop were reluctant to buy or unable to pay, the wholesale provider in London was forced to narrow his credit and call in his debts. The family stood closely to one another in the midst of a swarm of shabby embarrassments, and their neighbours looked on in friendly sympathy, impotent to help. Strangely enough, as some may think, they do not seem to

1826. ÆT. 22. have been very unhappy. They were all blessed by nature with a kind of blissful mercurial simplicity, that hindered their anxieties from eating into character. Their healthy buoyancy would not allow carking care to put the sun out in the heavens. When things were dreariest, Richard Cobden rowed himself across the Solent and back, and with one of his sisters enjoyed cheery days in the Isle of Wight, and among his kinsfolk at Chichester and elsewhere. Perhaps it was fortunate that his energetic spirit was free for the service of his family, at a moment when they seemed to be sinking below the surface. It was clear that means for the support of the household could only be found in some more considerable place than Westmeon. Presently it was resolved to migrate to Farnham, renowned for the excellence of its hop-gardens, for the stateliest of episcopal castles, and for its associations with two of the finest writers of English prose, William Cobbett who was the son of a Farnham cottager, and Jonathan Swift who had been Sir William Temple's secretary at Moor Park a mile or two away. Thinking less of any of these things, than of the hard eternal puzzle how to make sure of food and a roof-tree in the world, William Cobden migrated hither in the beginning of 1827. "The thought of leaving this dear village," one of his daughters had written (July, 1826), "endeared to us by a thousand tender recollections, makes me completely miserable." This dejection was shared in a supreme degree by the head of the household. He found some consolation in the good-will that he left behind him; and his old neighbours, when they were busy with turnip-sowing, hay-making, and sheep-shearing, were wont to invite him, partly for help and work, and partly for kindly fellowship's sake, to pay them long visits, never failing to send a horse up the road to meet him for his convenience and the furtherance of his journey.

Richard Cobden, meanwhile, had found a situation in 1826.
London, in the warehouse of Partridge and Price. Mr. Æt. 22.
Partridge had for seven years been one of Cobden's employers in the house which had failed, and he now resumed business with a new partner. He had learned, in his own words, Cobden's capacity of rendering himself pre-eminently useful, and he re-engaged him after a certain effort to drive a hard bargain as to salary. In September, 1826, Cobden again set out on the road with his samples of muslin and calico prints. He continued steadily at work for two years, travelling on an average, while on his circuit, at what was then thought, when the Manchester and Liverpool railway was only in course of construction, the brisk rate of forty miles a day.

Two years afterwards, in 1828, Cobden took an important 1828.
step. He and two friends who were in the same trade determined to begin business on their own account. The scheme of the three friends was to go to Manchester, and there to make an arrangement with some large firm of calico-printers for selling goods on commission. More than half of the little capital was borrowed. When the scheme first occurred to Cobden, he is said to have gone to Mr. Lewis of the well-known firm in Regent Street, to have laid the plan before him, and asked for a loan. The borrower's sanguine eloquence, advising a project that in itself was not irrational, proved successful, and Mr. Lewis's advance was supplemented by a further sum from a private friend.

Cobden wrote many years afterwards: "I began business in partnership with two other young men, and we only mustered a thousand pounds amongst us, and more than half of it was borrowed. We all got on the *Peveril of the Peak* coach, and went from London to Manchester in the, at that day [September, 1828], marvellously short space of twenty hours. We were literally so ignorant of Manchester houses

1828. that we called for a directory at the hotel, and turned to the
ÆT. 24. list of calico-printers, theirs being the business with which we were acquainted, and they being the people from whom we felt confident we could obtain credit. And why? Because we knew we should be able to satisfy them that we had advantages from our large connexions, our knowledge of the best branch of the business in London, and our superior taste in design, which would ensure success. We introduced ourselves to Fort Brothers and Co., a rich house, and we told our tale, honestly concealing nothing. In less than two years from 1830 we owed them forty thousand pounds for goods which they had sent to us in Watling Street, upon no other security than our characters and knowledge of our business. I frequently talked with them in later times upon the great confidence they showed in men who avowed that they were not possessed of 200*l.* each. Their answer was that they would always prefer to trust young men with connexions and with a knowledge of their trade, if they knew them to possess character and ability, to those who started with capital without these advantages, and that they had acted on this principle successfully in all parts of the world."[4]

This is from a letter written to express Cobden's firm belief in the general circumstance, "that it is the character, experience, and connexions of the man wanting credit, his knowledge of his business, and opportunities of making it available in the struggle of life, that weigh with the shrewd capitalist far more than the actual command of a few thousands more or less of money in hand." We may find reason to think that Cobden's temperament perhaps inclined him to push this excellent truth somewhat too far. Meanwhile, the sun of kindly hope shone. The situation is familiar to all who have had their own way to make from

[4] *Letter to Mr. W. S. Lindsay*, March 24, 1856.

obscurity to success, whether waiting for good fortune in Temple chambers, or a publisher's anteroom, or the commercial parlour of some provincial Crown or Unicorn. "During the time we have been here," Cobden wrote from Manchester, while affairs were still unsettled, "we have been in a state of suspense, and you would be amused to see us but for one day. Oh, such a change of moods! This moment we are all jocularity and laughter, and the next we are mute as fishes and grave as owls. To do ourselves justice, I must say that our croakings do not generally last more than five minutes."

Intense anxiety for the success of the undertaking was brightened by modest hopes of profits, of which a share of one third should amount to eight hundred pounds a year. And in Cobden's case these hopes received a suffusion of generous colour from the prospect which they opened to his affectionate solicitude for his family. "I knew your heart well enough," he wrote to his brother Frederick, "to feel that there is a large portion of it ever warmly devoted to my interests, and I should be doing injustice to mine if I did not tell you that I have not one ambitious view or hope from which you stand separated. I feel that Fortune, with her usual caprice, has in dealing with us turned her face to the least deserving, but we will correct her mistake for once, and I must insist that you from henceforth consider yourself as by right my associate in all her favours."—(Sept. 21, 1828.)

The important thing is that all this is no mere coinage of fair words, but the expression of a deep and genuine intention which was amply and most diligently fulfilled to the very last hour of Cobden's life.

CHAPTER II.

COMMERCIAL AND MENTAL PROGRESS.

1829.

ÆT. 25.

COBDEN had not been many months in his new partnership before his energetic mind teemed with fresh projects. The arrangement with the Forts had turned out excellently. The Lancashire printers, as we have seen, sent up their goods to the warehouse of Cobden and his two partners in Watling Street, in London. On the commission on the sale of these goods the little firm lived and throve from the spring of 1829 to 1831. In 1831 they determined to enlarge their borders, and to print their own goods. The conditions of the trade had just undergone a remarkable change. It had hitherto been burdened by a heavy duty, which ranged from as much as fifty or sixty, to even one hundred, per cent. of the value of the goods. In addition to excess in amount, there was a vexatious eccentricity of incidence; for woollens and silks were exempt, while calicoes were loaded with a duty that, as has been said, sometimes actually made up one half of the total cost of the cloth to the purchasers. As is invariably the case in fiscal history, excessive and ill-adjusted imposts led to systematic fraud. Amid these forces of disorder, it is no wonder that from 1825 to 1830 the trade was stationary. The Lancashire calico-printers kept up a steady agitation, and at one time it was proposed to raise four thousand pounds for the purchase of a seat in Parliament for a representative of their

grievances. The agitation was successful. The duty was taken off in the spring of 1831, and between 1831 and 1841 the trade doubled itself. 1829. ÆT. 25.

This great change fully warranted the new enterprise of Cobden and his partners. They took over from the Forts an old calico-printing factory at Sabden,—a remote village on the banks of a tributary of the Calder, near the ruined gateways and chapel of the Cistercian abbey at Whalley in Lancashire, and a few miles from where are now the fine mills and flourishing streets of Blackburn. The higher part of the Sabden valley runs up into the famous haunted Forest of Pendle; and notwithstanding the tall chimneys that may be seen dimly in the distance of the plain, the visitor to this sequestered spot may well feel as if the old world of white monks and forest witches still lingered on the bleak hill-sides. Cobden was all with the new world. His imagination had evidently been struck by the busy life of the county with which his name was destined to be so closely bound up. Manchester, he writes with enthusiasm, is the place for all men of bargain and business. His pen acquires a curiously exulting animation, as he describes the bustle of its streets, the quaintness of its dialect, the abundance of its capital, and the sturdy veterans with a hundred thousand pounds in each pocket, who might be seen in the evening smoking clay pipes and calling for brandy-and-water in the bar-parlours of homely taverns. He declared his conviction, from what he had seen, that if he were stripped naked and turned into Lancashire with only his experience for a capital, he would still make a large fortune. He would not give anybody sixpence to guarantee him wealth, if he only lived.[1] And so forth, in a vein of self-confidence which he himself well described as Napoleonic. "I am ever solicitous," he wrote to his brother (Jan. 30,

[1] *Letters to Frederick Cobden*, Aug. 11, 1831, Jan. 6, 1832, &c.

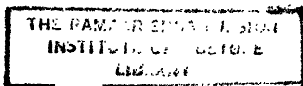
1832. ÆT. 28. 1832), "for your future prosperity, and I wish that I could convince you, as I feel convinced, that it all depends upon your bringing out with spirit the talents you possess. I wish that I could impart to you a little of that *Bonapartian* feeling with which I am imbued—a feeling that spurs me on with the conviction that all the obstacles to fortune with which I am impeded, will (nay, *shall*) yield if assailed with energy. All is lost to you, if you succumb to those desponding views which you mentioned when we last spoke. Dame Fortune, like other fair ones, loves a brisk and confident wooer. I want to see you able to pitch your voice in a higher key, especially when you are espousing your own interests, and above all, never to see you yield or become passive and indifferent when your cause is just, and only wants to be spiritedly supported to be sure of a triumph. But all this must proceed from within, and can be only the fruits of a larger growth of *spirit*, to the cultivation of which without further lecture I most earnestly commend you."

A more curious picture still is to be found in another letter, also to his brother, written a few months later (April 12, 1832). He describes his commercial plans as full of solidity, "sure for the present, and what is still better, opening a vista to my view of ambitious hopes and schemes almost boundless. Sometimes I confess I allow this sort of feeling to gain a painful and harassing ascendancy over me. It disquiets me in the night as well as day. It gnaws my very entrails (a positive truth), and yet if I ask, What is all this yearning after? I can scarcely give myself a satisfying answer. Surely not for money; I feel a disregard for it, and even a slovenly inattention to its possession, that is quite dangerous. I have scarcely ever, as usual, a sovereign in my pocket, and have been twice to Whalley, to find myself without the means of paying my expenses. I do not think that

the possession of millions would greatly alter my habits of expense." 1832. ÆT. 28.

As we might have expected in so buoyant and overflowing a temperament, moments of reaction were not absent, though the shadow was probably as swiftly transient with him as with any man that ever lived. In one of the letters of this period he writes to his brother:—"I know I must rise rapidly if not too heavily weighted. Another doleful letter from poor M. [one of his sisters] came yesterday. Oh, this is the only portion of the trials of my life that I could not go through again—the ordeal would send me to Bedlam! Well, I drown the past in still hoping for the future, but God knows whether futurity will be as great a cheat as ever. I sometimes think it will. I tell you candidly, I am sometimes out of spirits, and have need of *co-operation*, or Heaven knows yet what will become of my fine castles in the air. So you must bring *spirits—spirits—spirits*."

Few men indeed have been more heavily weighted at the start than Cobden was. His family were still dogged and tracked from place to place by the evil genius of slipshod fortune. In 1829 Frederick Cobden began the business of a timber merchant at Barnet, but unhappily the undertaking was as little successful as other things to which he ever put his hand. The little business at Farnham had failed, and had been abandoned. William Cobden went to live with his son at Barnet, and amused a favourite passion by watching the hundred and twenty coaches which each day whirled up and down the great north road. Nothing prospered. Death carried off a son and a daughter in the same year (1830). Frederick lost health, and he lost his brother's money, and spirits followed. He and his father make a strong instance of the deep saying of Shakespeare's Enobarbus, how men's judgments are a parcel of their fortunes, and things outward draw the inward quality after them to suffer all alike.



1832. Stubborn and besetting failure generally warps good sense,
ÆT. 28. and this is the hard warrant for the man of the world's anxiety to steer clear of unlucky people.

Richard Cobden, however had energy enough and to spare for the rest of his family. He pressed his brother to join him at Manchester where he had bought a house in what was then the genteel private quarter of Mosley Street.[2] Gillett and Sheriff carried on the business at the London warehouse, and Mr. George Foster who had been manager under the Forts, was now in charge as a partner at the works at Sabden.

It is at Sabden that we first hear of Cobden's interest in the affairs of others than himself and his kinsfolk. There, in a little stone school-house, we see the earliest monument of his eager and beneficent public spirit, which was destined to shed such prosperity over his country, and to contribute so helpfully to the civilization of the globe. In no part of England have the last forty years wrought so astonishing a change as among the once lonely valleys and wild moors of east Lancashire. At Sabden, in 1832, though the print-works alone maintained some six hundred wage-receivers, there was no school, and there was no church. A diminutive Baptist chapel, irregularly served, was the only agency for

[2] To those who care for a measure of the immense growth in the great capital of the cotton trade, the following extract will have some interest:—

"I have given such a start to Mosley Street, that all the world will be at my heels soon. My next door neighbour, Brooks, of the firm of Cunliffe and Brooks, bankers, has sold his house to be converted into a warehouse. The owner of the house on the other side has given his tenant notice for the same purpose. The house immediately opposite to me has been announced for sale, and my architect is commissioned by George Hole, the calico-printer, to bid 6000 guineas for it; but they want 8000 for what they paid 4500 only five years ago. The architect assures me if I were to put up my house to-morrow, I might have 6000 guineas for it. So as I gave but 3000, and all the world is talking of the bargain here, and there being but one opinion or criterion of a man's ability—*the making of money*—I am already thought a clever fellow."—*Letter to Frederick Cobden*, Sept. 1832.

bringing, so far as it did bring, the great religious tradition of the western world within reach of this isolated flock. The workers practised a singular independence towards their employers. They took it as matter of course that they were free, whenever it was their good pleasure, and without leave asked or given, to quit their work for a whole week at once, and to set out on a drinking expedition to some neighbouring town, whence they would have been ashamed to return until their pockets were drained to the last penny. Yet if there was little religion, there was great political spirit. There is a legend still surviving, how Mr. Foster, a Liberal of the finest and most enlightened type, with a clear head and a strong intelligence, and the good old-fashioned faith in freedom, justice, and progress, led the Sabden contingent of zealous voters to Clitheroe for the first election after the Reform Act, and how like a careful patriarch, he led them quickly back again after their civil duty was done; leaving the taverns of Clitheroe behind, and refreshing themselves at the springs on the hill-side. The politics of Sabden were not always so judicious, for it appears that no baptismal name for the children born in the valley between 1830 and 1840 was so universally popular as that of Feargus O'Connor.

It was in this far-off corner of the world that Cobden began his career as an agitator, and for a cause in which all England has long since come round to his mind. His earliest speeches were made at Clitheroe on behalf of the education of the young, and one of his earliest letters on what may fairly be called a public question is a note making arrangements for the exhibition at Sabden of twenty children from an infant school at Manchester, by way of an example and incentive to more backward regions. It was characteristic of him, that he threw as much eager enthusiasm into the direction of this exhibition of school-

1832. children, as ever he did afterwards into great affairs of
ÆT. 28. state. His partner was a worthy colleague.

"You have ground," Cobden wrote to him, "for very great and just self-gratulation in the movement which you announce to have begun in behalf of infant schools at Sabden. There is never the possibility of knowing the extent to which a philanthropic action may operate usefully—because the good works again multiply in like manner, and may continue thus to produce valuable fruits long after you cease to tend the growth of them. I have always been of opinion that good examples are more influential than bad ones, and I like to take this view of the case, because it strengthens my good hopes for general and permanent ameliorations. Look how perishable is the practice, and therefore how little is to be dreaded the eternity of evil; whilst goodness or virtue by the very force of example, and by its own indestructible nature, must go on increasing and multiplying for ever! I really think you may achieve the vast honour of making Sabden a light to lighten the surrounding country, and carrying civilization into towns that ought to have shed rays of knowledge upon your village; when you have furnished a volunteer corps of your infant troops to teach the tactics of the system to the people of Clitheroe, you should make an offer of a similar service gratis to the good people of Padiham. Let it be done in a formal and open manner to the leading people of the place and neighbourhood, who will thus be openly called upon to exert themselves, and be at the same time instructed how to go about the business. *There are many well meaning people in the world who are not so useful as they might be, from not knowing how to go to work.*"[1]

His perception of the truth of the last sentence, coupled as it was with untiring energy in coping with it, and showing

[1] *To Mr. George Foster*, April 14, 1836.

people how they could go to work best, was the secret of 1833.
one of the most important sides of Cobden's public service. ÆT. 28.
It was this which, along with his acute political intelligence, made him so singularly effective. "You tell me," he wrote on one occasion to his partner, "to take time and be comfortable, but I fear quiet will not be my lot this trip. I sometimes dream of quiet, but then I recollect Byron's line,—

Quiet to quick bosoms is a hell,

and I am afraid he is nearly right in my case."[4] Yet this disquiet never in him degenerated into the sterile bustle which so many restless spirits have mistaken for practical energy. Behind all his sanguine enthusiasm as to public ends, lay the wisest patience as to means.

What surprises one in reading the letters which Cobden 1833-6.
wrote between 1833 and 1836, is the quickness with which his character widened and ripened. We pass at a single step from the natural and wholesome egotism of the young man who has his bread to win, to the wide interests and generous public spirit of the good citizen. His first motion was towards his own intellectual improvement. Even at a moment when he might readily have been excused for thinking only of money and muslins, he felt and obeyed the necessity for knowledge: but of knowledge as an instrument, not as a luxury. When he was immersed in the first pressing anxieties of his new business at Manchester, he wrote to his brother in London (September, 1832):—

"Might we not in the winter instruct ourselves a little in Mathematics? If you will call at Longmans and look over their catalogue, I daresay you might find some popular elementary publication that would assist us. I have a great disposition, too, to know a little Latin, and six months would suffice if I had a few books. Can you trust your

[4] *To Mr. Foster*, May 14, 1836.

1833-6. perseverance to stick to them? I think I can. Let me
ÆT. 29-32. hear from you. I wished Henry to take lessons in Spanish this winter; it is most useful as a commercial language; the two Americas will be our best and largest customers in spite of tariffs."

He had early in life felt the impulse of composition. His first writing was a play, entitled *The Phrenologist*, and Cobden offered it to the manager of Covent Garden Theatre. He rejected it—"luckily for me," Cobden added, "for if he had accepted it, I should probably have been a vagabond all the rest of my life." Another comedy still survives in manuscript; it is entirely without quality, and if the writer ever looked at it in riper years, he probably had no difficulty in understanding why the manager would have nothing to do with it. His earliest political work consisted of letters addressed anonymously to one of the Manchester newspapers (1835) on the subject of the incorporation of the borough. But it was the pamphlet of 1835, *England, Ireland, and America*, which first showed the writer's power. Of the political teaching of this performance we shall say something in another chapter. Here we mention it as illustrating the direction in which Cobden's thoughts were busy, and the kind of nourishment with which he was strengthening his understanding during the years previous to his final launch forth upon the sea of great affairs.

This pamphlet and that which followed it in the next year, show by their references and illustrations that the writer, after his settlement in Manchester in the autumn of 1832, had made himself acquainted with the greatness of Cervantes, the geniality of Le Sage, the sweetness of Spenser, the splendid majesty of Burke, no less than with the general course of European history in the past, and the wide forces that were then actually at work in the present. One who had intimate relations with Cobden in these earlier

years of his career, described him to me as always writing and speaking "*to the top of his knowledge.*" The real meaning of this, I believe, was that Cobden had a peculiar gift for turning everything that he read to useful purpose in strengthening or adorning his arguments. He only read or listened where he expected to find help, and his quickness in assimilating was due to a combination of strong concentration of interest on his own subject, with keen dexterity in turning light upon it from other subjects. Or, in saying that Cobden always spoke and wrote to the top of his knowledge, our informant was perhaps expressing what any one may well feel in reading his pamphlets and speeches, namely, that he had a mind so intensely alive, so penetrative, so real, as to be able by means of moderate knowledge rapidly acquired, to get nearer to the root of the matter, than others who had laboured after a far more extensive preparation.

1833-6.
Æт. 29-32.

Very early in life Cobden perceived, and he never ceased to perceive, that for his purposes no preparation could be so effective as that of travel. He first went abroad in the summer of 1833 (July), when he visited Paris in search of designs for his business. He did not on this occasion stay long enough to derive any ideas about France that are worth recording now. He hardly got beyond the common English impression that the French are a nation of grown-up children, though he described the habit of Parisian life in a happy phrase, as "*pleasure without pomp.*"[1]

In the following year he again went to France, and continued his journey to Switzerland. The forests and mountains inspired him with the admiration and awe that no modern can avoid. Once in after-years, a friend who was about to visit the United States, asked him whether it would be worth while to go far out of his way for the sake of seeing the Falls of Niagara. "Yes, most assuredly," was

1834.

[1] *To F. Cobden*, July 27, 1833.

1834. Cobden's reply. "Nature has the sublimity of rest, and the
ÆT. 30. sublimity of motion. The sublimity of rest is in the great snow mountains; the sublimity of motion is in Niagara."

Although he had to its fullest extent this sentiment for the imposing glories of the inanimate universe, yet it is characteristic of his right sense of the true measure of things, that after speaking of Swiss scenery, he marks to his brother, as "*better still*," that he has made acquaintance with people who could tell him about the life and institutions of the land. "The people of this country are I believe the best governed and therefore the most prosperous and happy in the world. It is the only Government which has not one *douanier* in its pay, and yet, thanks to free trade, there is scarcely any branch of manufacturing industry which does not in one part or other of the country find a healthy occupation. The farmers are substantial. Here is a far more elevated character of husbandry life than I expected to see. Enormous farm-houses and barns; plenty of out-houses of every kind; and the horses and cows are superior to those of the English farmers. The sheep and pigs are very, very bad. They have not adopted the Chinese breed of the latter, and the former they do not pay much attention to. I did not see a field of turnips in all the country. Cows are the staple of the farming trade." [1]

It was to the United States, rather even than to Switzerland, that Cobden's social faith and enthusiasm turned; and after his pamphlet was published in the spring of 1835, he resolved to see with his own eyes the great land of uncounted promise. Business was prosperous, and though his partners thought in their hearts that he might do better by attending to affairs at home, they allowed some freedom to the enterprising genius of their ally, and made no objection to his absence.

[1] *To F. Cobden.* From Geneva, June 6, 1834.

Meanwhile his father had died (June 15, 1833). When 1833.
Frederick Cobden had joined his brother in Manchester, ÆT. 29.
the old man had gone to live with his daughters in London. But he could not bear the process of transplanting. He pined for his old life in the beloved country, and his health failed rapidly. They removed him shortly before he died to Droxford, but it was too late, and he did not long survive the change. The last few months of a life that would have been very dreary but for the undying glow of family affection, were gilded by the reflection of his son's prosperity.

It is the bitterest element in the vast irony of human life that the time-worn eyes to which a son's success would have brought the purest gladness, are so often closed for ever before success has come.

CHAPTER III.

TRAVELS IN WEST AND EAST.

1835. On May 1, 1835, Cobden left Manchester, took his passage
Æt. 31. in the *Britannia*, and after a boisterous and tiresome voyage of more than five weeks in the face of strong west winds, arrived in the port of New York on June 7. His brother, Henry, who had gone to America some time previously, met him on the wharf. In his short diary of the tour, Cobden almost begins the record by exclaiming, "What beauty will this inner bay of New York present centuries hence, when wealth and commerce shall have done their utmost to embellish the scene!" And writing to his brother, he expresses his joy at finding himself in a country, "on the soil of which I fondly hope will be realized some of those dreams of human exaltation, if not of perfection, with which I love to console myself."[1]

It is not necessary to follow the itinerary of the thirty-seven days which Cobden now passed in the United States. He visited the chief cities of the Eastern shore, but found his way no farther west than Buffalo and Pittsburg. Cobden was all his life long remarkable for possessing the traveller's most priceless resource, patience and good-humour under discomfort. He was a match for the Americans themselves, whose powers of endurance under the small tribulations of railways and hotels excite the envy of Europeans. "Poland [in Ohio]," Cobden notes in his journal, "where we changed

[1] *To F. C.*, June 7, 1835.

coaches, is a pretty thriving little town, chiefly of wood, with two or three brick houses, quite in the English style. We proceeded to Young's Town, six miles, and there again changed coaches, but had to wait three hours of the night until the branch stage arrived, and I lost my temper for the first time in America, in consequence."

He remarked that politics were rarely discussed in public conveyances. "Here [in Ohio] I found, as in every other company, the slavery blot viewed as an indelible stain upon, and a curse to, the country. An intelligent old gentleman said he would prefer the debt of Great Britain to the coloured population of the United States. All agreed in the hopelessness of any remedy that had been proposed."

Cobden's curiosity and observation were as alert and as varied as usual, from wages, hours of labour, quality of land, down to swift trotters, and a fellow-traveller "who wore gold spectacles, talked of 'taste,' and questioned me about Bulwer, Lady Blessington, and the Duke of Devonshire, but chewed tobacco and spat incessantly, clearing the lady, out of the window." He felt the emotions of Moses on Pisgah, as he looked down from one of the northern spurs of the Alleghanies:—

"Passing over the last summit of the Alleghanies, called Laurel Hill, we looked down upon a plain country, the beginning of that vast extent of territory known as the Great Mississipi Valley, which extends almost without variation of surface to the base of the Rocky Mountains, and increases in fertility and beauty the further it extends westward. Here will one day be the head-quarters of agricultural and manufacturing industry; here will one day centre the civilization, the wealth, the power of the entire world. The country is well cleared, it has been occupied by Europeans only eighty years, and it is the best soil I have seen on this side of the Atlantic. Any number of able-bodied

1835. labourers may, the moment they tread the grass west of the
ÆT. 31. Alleghanies, have employment at two shillings a day and be 'found.' We arrived at Brownsville at four o'clock, the only place I have yet seen that uses coals for fuel. We are now in the State of Pennsylvania. Thank God I am no longer in the country of slaves."[1]

On coaches and steamboats he was constantly struck, as all travellers in America have been, by the vehement and sometimes unreasonable national self-esteem of the people. At the theatre at Pittsburg he remarked the enthusiasm with which any republican sentiment was caught up, and he records the rapturous cheers that greeted the magniloquent speech of one of the characters,—"No crowned head in Christendom can boast that he ever commanded for one hour the services of this right arm." The Americans were at that time suffering one of their too common fits of smart and irritation under English criticism. They never saw an Englishman without breaking out against Mrs. Trollope, Captain Basil Hall, and, above all, Fanny Kemble. "Nothing but praise unqualified and unadulterated will satisfy people of such a disposition. We passed by the scene of Bradock's defeat by the French and Indians on Turtle Creek. Our American friends talked of New Orleans."[2] Their self-glorification sometimes roused Cobden to protest, though he thought he saw signs that it was likely to diminish, as has indeed been the case:—

"It strikes me that the organ of self-esteem is destined to be the national feature in the craniums of this people. They are the most insatiable gourmands of flattery and praise that ever existed. I mean praise of their country, its institutions, great men, etcetera. I was, for instance, riding out with a Judge Boardman and a lady, when the Judge, speaking of

[1] *To F. Cobden*, June 15, 1835.

[2] *To F. C.*, June 16, 1835. See below, p. 34, n.

Daniel Webster, said, quite coolly, and without a smile, for I 1835.
looked for one very closely, thinking he joked, 'I do not ÆT. 31.
know if the great Lord Chatham might not have been his equal, but certainly no British statesman has since his day deserved to be compared with him.' And the lady, in the same serious tone, asked me if I did not find the private carriages handsomer in New York than ours were in England! I have heard all sorts of absurdities spoken in reference to the glorious incidents of this nation's history, and very often have been astonished to find my attention called (with a view to solicit my concurrence with the enthusiastic praises of the speaker) to battles and other events which I had never heard of before, and which yet the Americans consider to be as familiarly known to all the world as to themselves. I consider this failing—perhaps, as a good phrenologist, I might almost term it a *disease*—to be an unfortunate peculiarity. There is no cure for it, however. On the contrary, it will go on increasing with the increase of the wealth, power, and population of the United States, so long as they are *United*, but no longer. I have generally made it a rule to parry the inquiries and comparisons which the Americans are so apt to thrust at an Englishman. On one or two occasions, when the party has been numerous and worth powder and shot, I have, however, on being hard pressed, and finding my British blood up, found the only mode of allaying their inordinate vanity to be by resorting to this mode of argument:—'I admit all that you or any other person can, could, may, or might advance in praise of the past career of the people of America. Nay, more, I will myself assert that no nation ever did, and in my opinion none ever will, achieve such a title to respect, wonder, and gratitude in so short a period; and further still, I venture to allege that the imagination of statesmen never dreamed of a country that should in half a century make such pro-

1835. digious advances in civilization and real greatness as yours
ÆT. 31. has done. And now I must add, and I am sure you, as intelligent, reasonable men, will go with me, that fifty years are too short a period in the existence of nations to entitle them to the palm of history. No, wait the ordeal of wars, distresses, and prosperity (the most dangerous of all), which centuries of duration are sure to bring to your country. These are the test, and if, many ages hence, your descendants shall be able only to say of their country as much as I am entitled to say of mine *now*, that for seven hundred years we have existed as a nation constantly advancing in liberty, wealth, and refinement; holding out the lights of philosophy and true religion to all the world; presenting mankind with the greatest of human institutions in the trial by jury; and that we are the only modern people that for so long a time withstood the attacks of enemies so heroically that a foreign foe never put foot in our capital except as a prisoner (*this last is a poser*[4]);—if many centuries hence your descendants will be entitled to say something equivalent to this, then, and not till then, will you be entitled to that crown of fame which the historian of centuries is entitled to award.' There is no way of conveying a rebuke so efficiently as upon the back of a compliment. So in like manner, if I have been bored about New Orleans, I have replied, 'I join in all that can be said in favour of General Jackson. As a commander he has probably achieved more than any other man by destroying two thousand of his enemies with only the loss of twenty men. But the merit rests solely with the General, for you, as intelligent men, will agree that there could be no honour reaped by troops who never were even *seen* by their enemies.' "[5]

[4] The reader will remember, as Cobden's listeners did, that Washington was occupied by British forces in 1814.

[5] *To F. Cobden*, from Boston, July 5, 1835. Cobden's reference is to the

Of the great glory of the American continent, Cobden thought as rapturously as any boaster in the land. We have previously quoted his expression about Niagara being the sublimity of motion, and here is the account of his first visit to the incomparable Falls. "From Chippewa village, the smoke (as it appears to be) rising from the cataract is visible. There was not such a volume of mist as I had expected, and the noise was not great. I reached the Pavilion Hotel near the falls at one o'clock. I immediately went to see this greatest of natural wonders alone. I jealously guarded my eyes from wandering until I found myself on the Table Rock. Thank God that has bestowed on me health, time, and means for reaching this spot, and the spirit to kindle at the spectacle before me! The Horse-shoe is the all-absorbing portion of the scene from this point; the feathery graceful effect of the water as it tumbles in broken and irregular channels over the edge of the rock has not been properly described. Nor has the effect of the rapids above the shoot, seen from this point, as they come surging, lashing, and hissing in apparent agony at the terrific destiny before them. This rapid above the falls might be called a rush of the waters preparatory to their taking their awful leap. The water is thrown over an irregular ledge, but in falling it completely hides the face of the perpendicular rock down which it falls. Instead of an even sheet of glassy water, it falls in light and graceful festoons of foaming, nay almost vapoury fluid, possessing

1835.
Ær. 31.

engagement of the 8th of January, 1815, when Andrew Jackson at New Orleans repulsed the British forces under Sir Edward Pakenham. The Americans mowed the enemy down from behind high works. The British loss was 700 killed, 1400 wounded, and 500 prisoners; Jackson's loss, eight killed, and thirteen wounded. As it happened, the two countries were no longer at war at the moment, for peace had been signed at Ghent a fortnight before (Dec. 24, 1814). General Pakenham, who was Wellington's brother-in-law, fell while bravely rallying his columns under a murderous fire.

1835. ÆT. 31. just enough consistency to descend in various-sized and hardly distinguishable streams, whilst here and there one of these foaming volumes encounters a projecting rock in its descent, which forces it back in heavy spray into the still descending torrent above; thus giving indescribable beauty and variety to the scene. In the afternoon I crossed the river below the falls, and visited Goat's Island. At the foot of the staircase there is a view of the American fall at a point of rock near the bottom of the cascade, terrific beyond conception, and totally opposite to the effect of the Horse-shoe Fall as seen from Table Rock. I ascended the stairs and passed over the bridge to Goat's Island. The view from the platform overhanging the Horse-shoe Fall, when you look right down into the abyss, and are standing immediately over the descending water, is horrible. I do not think people would take any pleasure in being placed in this fearful position, unless others were looking on, or unless for the vain gratification of talking about it. In the evening I again looked at the Horse-shoe Fall from Table Rock until dark—oh, for an English twilight! The effect of this fall is improved by the water which flows over the ledge being of very different depths, from two to twenty feet, which of course causes the water to flow more or less in a mass, so that in one part it descends nearly half way in a blue, unbroken sheet, whilst not far off it is scattered into the whitest foam almost as soon as it has passed the edge of the rock. The water for several hundred yards below the fall is as white as drift snow—not a mere white froth, but wherever it is disturbed it shows nothing but a white milk-like effect unlike any water I ever saw."[6]

* * * * *

"In the morning I went in a coach with Messrs. Cunningham and Church, and Henry, to see the whirlpool three miles

[6] *To F. C.*, June 21, 1835.

down the stream. I was disappointed; I don't know if it was that the all-absorbing influence of the falls prevented my taking any interest in other scenes. After dinner, I descended to view the Horse-shoe Fall from behind the curtain of water; the stunning noise and the heavy beating of the water render this a severe adventure, but there is no danger. The effect of the sound is that of the most terrific thunder. There is very little effect for the eye. We went to view the burning well, which would certainly light a town with gas. Putting a tub over the well produces a complete gasometer. A tree was thrown into the rapid, but the effect is not great, it dropped immediately it passed the ledge more perpendicularly than the cascade, and so disappeared. In the balcony looking over the falls there was a stupid-looking man, telling a stupid story, about a stupid *lord*. It assured me that I was amongst my own countrymen again. The negro barber here is a runaway black from Virginia.

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"From Table Rock we saw a rainbow which formed nearly a complete circle. We crossed again to the American side with Mr. Cunningham, and took a bath, for there is not one on the Canada side. The ferryman told us of a gentleman who swam over three times. I felt less disposed than ever to quit this spot, so full of ever-increasing attraction. Were I an American, I would here strive to build me a summer residence. In the evening there were drunken people about. I have seen more intoxicated persons at this first Canada town, than in any place in the States. The view from Table Rock was rather obscured by the mist. At dinner a crowded table was wholly vacated in twenty minutes! Think of sixty persons at an English watering-place dining and leaving the table in twenty minutes! I took a last and reluctant leave of this greatest of all nature's works."[7]

[7] June 22, 1835.

1835. Æt. 31. Cobden summed up his impressions in a long letter to his brother at Manchester:—

"I am thus far on my way back again to New York, which city I expect to reach on the 8th inst., after completing a tour through Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Pittsburg, Lake Erie to Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Albany (*viâ* Auburn, Utica, Schenectady) and the Connecticut valley to Boston, and Lowell, etc., to-morrow. On my return to New York, I purpose giving two days to the Hudson river, going up to Albany one day, and returning the next; after which I shall have two or three days for the purpose of taking leave of my good friends in New York, previously to going on board the *Britannia* on the 16th. My journey may be called a real *pleasure* trip, for without an exception or interruption of any kind, I have enjoyed every minute of the too, too short time allowed me for seeing this truly magnificent country. No one has yet done justice to the splendid scenery of America. Her lakes, rivers, forests, and above all her cataracts are peculiarly her own, and when I think of their superiority to all that we own in the Old World, and, still more, when I recollect that by a mysterious ordinance of their Creator, these were hid from 'learned ken' till modern times, I fell into the fanciful belief that the Western continent was brought forth at a second birth, and intended by nature as a more perfect specimen of her handiwork. But how in the name of breeding must we account for the degeneracy of the human form in this otherwise mammoth-producing soil? The men are but sorry descendants from the noble race that begot their ancestors; and as for the women! My eyes have not found one resting-place that deserves to be called a wholesome, blooming, pretty woman since I have been here. One fourth part of the women look as if they had just recovered from a fit of the jaundice, another quarter would in England be termed

in a state of decided consumption, and the remainder are fitly likened to our fashionable women when haggard and jaded with the dissipation of a London season. There, haven't I *out-trolloped* Mrs. Trollope, and overhauled even Basil Hall?

"But leaving the physique for the morale. My estimate of American character has improved, contrary to my expectations, by this visit. Great as was my previous esteem for the qualities of this people, I find myself in love with their intelligence, their sincerity, and the decorous self-respect that actuates all classes. The very genius of activity seems to have found its fit abode in the souls of this restless and energetic race. They have not, 'tis true, the force of Englishmen in personal weight or strength, but they have compensated for this deficiency by quickening the momentum of their enterprises. All is in favour of celerity of action and the saving of time. Speed, speed, speed, is the motto that is stamped in the form of their ships and steamboats, in the breed of their horses, and the light construction of their waggons and carts: and in the ten thousand contrivances that are met with here, whether for the abridging of the labour of months or minutes, whether a high-pressure engine or a patent boot-jack. All is done in pursuit of one common object, the economy of time. We like to speculate upon the future, and I have sometimes tried to conjecture what the industry and ingenuity and activity of that future people of New Holland, or of some other at present unknown continent, will amount to, which shall surpass and supersede the Yankees in the career of improvements, as effectually as these have done the natives of the Old World. They must be a race that will be able to dispense with food and sleep altogether, for the Americans have certainly discovered the minimum of time that is required for the services of their beds and boards. Their mechanical engines must work

1835. miracles 'till panting time toils after them in vain.' In fact
ÆT. 31. I regard it as *almost* as improbable for another community to rival the population of these states in prosperity, as for an *individual* to surpass our indefatigable friend and self-sacrificed free-born slave, K——, in the race of hard-earned fortune. You know I predicted when leaving England for this continent, that I should not find it sufficiently to my taste to relish a sojourn here for life. My feelings in this respect are quite altered. I know of no reasonable ground for an aversion to this country, and none but unreasonable minds could fail to be as happy here as in England, provided friendly attachments did not draw them to the Old country. My own predilection is rather in favour of Washington as a residence. Baltimore is also, I should imagine, a pleasant town. These two are now by means of the railroad almost identical. By-the-bye, when running through those towns on my way to the west, and in the design of extending my journey as far as Montreal, which I have since found to be impracticable, unfortunately I resisted all kind invitations to remain even for the purpose of being introduced to old Hickory, which would have delayed me only a day. I have since regretted this very much." [8]

Cobden arrived in England in the middle of August, after an uneventful voyage, in which he found no better way of amusing himself than by analyzing the character of his fellow-passengers, and reducing them to types. Early in life his eager curiosity had been attracted by the doctrines of phrenology, and however crude the pretensions of phrenology may now appear, it will always deserve a certain measure of historic respect as being the first attempt to popularize the study of character by system, and the arrangement of men's faculty and disposition in classes. To accept phrenology to-day would stamp a man as un-

[8] *To F. C.*, July 5, 1835. From Boston.

scientific, but to accept it in 1835 was a good sign of mental activity. Cobden's portraits of his shipmates, if they are not so deep-reaching as La Bruyère, serve to illustrate his habit of watching the ways of men, of studying the differences among them, and of judging them with the kindly neutrality of the humourist or the naturalist. How useful this habit became to the leader of a political agitation, in which patient and versatile handling of different characters is so important a gift, we shall soon see.

After his return from America, Cobden remained at home for fifteen months, from the summer of 1835 to the autumn of 1836. He began by making up all arrears of business, and discussing new projects with his partners. But public affairs drew him with irresistible attraction. It was probably in this interval that he made his first public speech. The object of the meeting, which was small and unimportant, was to further the demand of a corporation for Manchester. Cobden was diffident, and unwilling to speak. He was at length induced to rise, but his speech is described as a signal failure. "He was nervous," says the chronicler, "confused, and in fact practically broke down, and the chairman had to apologize for him." The first occasion on which his name appears in the newspapers is the announcement that he was chosen to be on the committee of the newly established Athenæum at Manchester, and he modestly seconded a resolution at the meeting.[9] The important piece of work of this date was the pamphlet on *Russia*, which was published in the summer of 1836.[10] The earlier pamphlet,

[9] Oct. 1, 1835.

[10] The original advertisement is as follows:—"On Monday, July 25, will be published, price 8d., *Russia*, by a Manchester Manufacturer, author of *England, Ireland, and America*. Contents—1. Russia, Turkey, and England. 2. Poland, Russia, and England. 3. The Balance of Power. 4. Protection of Commerce. . . . This is not a party pamphlet, nor will Russia be found as the title might seem to imply, to be exclusively the subject of inquiry in the following pages."

1835. *England, Ireland, and America,* had been published, as I have
ÆT. 31. already mentioned, in the spring of 1835, and within twelve months had gone through three editions, at what we should now consider the high price of three shillings and sixpence; it had in April, 1836, reached a fifth edition at sixpence; The newspapers had been liberal in its praise, and its author had been described in the sonorous style of the conventional leading article as a man of a liberal and comprehensive mind, an acute and original thinker, a clear and interesting writer, "and in the best because not an exclusive sense of the term—a true patriot."[1] Mr. Ridgway, the publisher, informed Cobden that nobody ought to print a pamphlet unless he had some other object in view, besides publication. "I have another object," Cobden adds, "in distant and dim perspective."[2] We may assume that, when he said this, he was thinking, with natural ambition, of the pedestal from which a place in Parliament enables a man to address his audience. These two pieces are important enough in Cobden's history to deserve a chapter of their own, but it will be convenient before dealing with them to complete the travels which followed the publication of the
1836. second of them. Shortly afterwards the strain of so
ÆT. 32. many interests affected Cobden's health. He had suffered severely from an illness at the end of the previous year, and the doctors counselled a winter abroad. As the business was in good order, and the mainspring, to use Cobden's own

[1] *Manchester Guardian,* May 23, 1835. The London *Times,* May 5, 1836 describes the pamphlet as having "some sound views of the true foreign policy of England, and some just and forcible reflections on the causes which keep us in the rear of improvement," &c.

The *Manchester Guardian*—we may notice as a point in that important matter, the history of the periodical press—was from Jan. 1, 1830, to Sept. 15, 1836, published once a week, and sold for sevenpence. After the duty on paper was reduced (Sept. 15, 1836), it was published twice a week, and its price brought down to fourpence.

[2] *To F. Cobden,* March 31, 1835.

figure in the matter, was not necessary until the following 1836.
spring, he resolved to set forth eastward. On the 22nd of ÆT. 32.
October he sailed from Plymouth. He arrived in Falmouth harbour, on his return, on the 21st of April, 1837.

The ship touched at Lisbon and Cadiz, and Cobden wrote lively accounts to his friends at home of all that he saw. His description of Cadiz was stopped short by recollecting Byron's famous account, and the only subject on which he permitted himself to expatiate repeatedly and at length was the beauty of the ladies and their dress. "At Cadiz too," he writes to his partner at Sabden, "you may see the loveliest female costume in the world—the Spanish mantilla! All the head-dresses in Christendom must yield the palm to this. It is, as you may see in the little clay figures of Spanish ladies which are sold in England, a veil and mantle combined, which falls from a high comb at the back of the top of the head, down to the elbow in front, and just below the shoulders behind. A fan, which is universally carried, is twirled and brandished about, with an air quite murderous to the hearts of sensitive bachelors. Black silk is the national costume, and thus these sable beauties are always seen in the streets or at the promenade. Judge of the climate, judge of the streets, and of the atmosphere of their cities, where all the ladies appear in public in full dress! Sorry, however, am I to tell you that the demon innovation is making war upon the mantilla, in the shape of foreign fashions—French bonnets are beginning to usurp the throne of the black mantilla. Reformer as I am, I would fain be a conservative of that ancient and venerable institution, *the mantilla*. The French will have much to answer for, if they supersede with their frippery and finery this beautiful mode."[1]

Now, as in the busiest days of his life, Cobden was a

[1] *To Mr. Foster*, from Alexandria, Nov. 28, 1836.

1836. ÆT. 32. voluminous and untiring letter-writer. In the hottest time of the agitation against the Corn Laws, he no sooner flung off his overcoat on reaching the inn after a long journey or a boisterous meeting, than he called for pen and ink, and sat down to write letters of argument, remonstrance, persuasion, direction. And when, as now, he was travelling for relaxation, the same impulse was irresistibly strong upon him, the same expansive desire to communicate to others his impressions, ideas, and experiences. "I am writing this," he says on one occasion, "whilst sailing down the Nile on my return to Alexandria, and it is penned upon no better desk than my knees, while sitting cross-legged upon my mattress, in the cabin of a boat not high enough in the roof to allow me even to stand."[4] No physical inconvenience and no need of repose ever dulled his willingness either to hear or to speak. The biographer's only embarrassment is difficulty of selection from superabundant material. Journals and letters alike show the same man, of quick observation, gay spirits, and a disposition that, on its serious side, was energetically reflective rather than contemplative. I wish that I could reproduce his journals, but they are too copious for the limits of my space; and the statements of commercial fact which they contain are no longer true, while the currents of trade which Cobden took such pains to trace out, have long since shifted their direction. He was an eager and incessant questioner, and yet his journals show a man who is acquiring knowledge, not with the elaborate conscientiousness of a set purpose, but with the ease of natural and spontaneous interest. There is no overdone earnestness; life is not crushed out of us by the sledge-hammer of the statistical bore; there is the charm of disengagement, and the faculty of disengagement is one of the secrets of the most effective kind of character. Elaborate inquiries as to

[4] *To Charles Cobden*, Jan. 8, 1837.

imports and exports do not prevent him from being well 1836.
pleased to go ashore at Tenos, "to amuse ourselves for a Ætr. 32.
day with leaping, throwing, and jumping." As the serious interests of his journey—the commercial and political circumstances of Egypt, Greece, and Turkey—are no longer in the same case, it can hardly be worth while to transcribe his account of them.

The following extracts from his letters to his sisters will serve to show his route :—

Gibraltar, 11 *Nov.*, 1836.—"Before us arose the towering and impregnable fortress; on every side land was distinctly visible; my first inquiry was, Where is the coast of Africa? It was a natural curiosity. A quarter of the globe where white men's feet have but partially trod, whose sandy plains and mountains are unknown, and where imagination may revel in unreal creations of the terrible, was for the first time presented to my view. Can you doubt that the thought which arose in my mind for a time absorbed all other reflections? Yet all I could see was the dark sable outline of the coast of Barbary, a congenial shroud for the gloomy scene of pagan woes and Christian crimes that have been enacted in the regions beyond!

"The two particulars," he continued, "which strike most strongly the eye of the visitor who has passed from Spain and Portugal to this place, are the bustling activity of Gibraltar, as contrasted with the deserted condition of Lisbon and Cadiz, and the variety of the costumes and characters which suddenly offer themselves to his notice. To see both to advantage, it is necessary to visit the open square opposite to the Exchange, where the auctions and other business draw a concourse of all the inhabitants and sojourners in this rocky Babel.

"Fortunately our hotel opens immediately upon this lively scene, and I have spent hours in surveying from above the

1836. Ær. 32. variegated lines of the motley multitude below. By far the most dignified and interesting figure is the Moor, who, with his turban, rich yellow slippers, ample flowing robes, and bare legs, presents a picturesque figure which is admirably contrasted with that of a Catalonian, who—with a red cap, which depends from a black band that encircles his head, like a long bag down nearly to his waist, pantaloons which are braced up to his armpits, and short round jacket,—may be seen jostling with the idle smuggler, with his leather embroidered leggings, his breeches of velvet adorned with side rows of bright basket buttons, his sash, embroidered jacket, and grotesque conical hat; whose life is a romance and probably a tragedy, and every one of whose gestures is viewed with interest as the by-play of one who by turns acts the part of a contrabandista, a bandit, or an assassin. Next is the Jew, who is here beheld in the most abject guise of his despised class: a rude mantle of the coarsest blanketing covers his crouching figure, bent by the severe toil with which he here earns a miserable subsistence; he is waiting with a patient and leaning aspect the call of some purchaser. His bare legs and uncovered head and the ropes indicative of his laborious calling, which are probably fastened loosely about his waist, altogether give him the appearance of one who has been condemned to a life of penance for the expiation of some heinous crimes:—alas, he is only the personification of the fate of his tribe! But I could not find space to portray the minor features of the scene before me. Here are English, French, Spanish, Italian, Mahometans, Christians, and Jews, all bawling and jostling each other, some buying, others selling or bartering, whilst the fierce competition for profit is maintained by a mingled din of the Spanish, Arabic, Lingua Franca, and English tongues. This is a scene only to be viewed in Gibraltar, and it is worthy of the pains of a pilgrimage from afar to behold it."

Gibraltar, 11 *Nov.*, 1836.—"A trip was made by a party of five of us on horseback to a convent fifteen miles off. The road lies through a cork wood, and it is a favourite excursion from the garrison. It was delightful, after seeing nothing but barren rocks, and being confined to the limits of this fortress—which is seven miles in circumference—to find ourselves galloping through woods where hundreds of pathways allowed one unlimited range, and where thousands of beautiful trees and plants peculiar to this part arrested our attention. The doctor[a] was in a botanical mood at once, and we all gathered about to learn from him the names and properties of such plants as were to us new acquaintances. After filling our pockets with seeds and specimens, we pursued our journey to the convent, which is a dilapidated building, in which we found only one solitary monk. A large courtyard, in which were two or three gaunt-looking dogs, who from their manners appeared unused to receive visitors; extensive stables, in which we found only the foals of an ass, in place of a score of horses; a belfry without ropes; vast kitchens, but no fire; and spacious corridors, dormitories, and refectories, in which I could not discover a vestige of furniture, revealed a picture of desolation and loneliness. We walked into the gardens and found oranges ripening, and the fig-tree, pomegranate, sago palm, olives, and grape-vines flourishing amidst weeds that were almost impervious to our feet. The country around was wild, and harmonized with the ruined and abandoned fortunes of the convent. After partaking of some brown bread, eggs, and chestnuts, from the hands of the monk, and after enlivening his solitary cloisters with the unwonted echoes of our merriment, in which we found our poor old host willing to indulge, we left him,

[a] Dr. Wilson, his travelling companion, whose acquaintance he had first made in his voyage home from the United States.

1836. Æt. 32. and returned through the cork wood to our quarters here."

Alexandria, 30 *Nov.*, 1836.—"In consequence of the arrival of the governor, we were greeted with much noise and rejoicing by the good folks of Malta. The town was illuminated, bands of singers paraded the streets, the opera was thrown open, and all was given up to fun and revelry. We saw all that we could of the proceedings, and heard during the night more than we could have wished, considering that we wanted a quiet sleep. However, it was necessary for us to be up betimes in the morning, to make some preparations for our journey in Egypt. The good doctor was in a great bustle, purchasing the biscuits, brandy, and other little commodities; it was necessary also that we should engage a trusty servant at Malta, to accompany us through the voyage. Our friends recommended a man named Rosario Villa, who had made the excursion up the Nile several times with English tourists—spoke Arabic, English, and Italian, and knew the whole of Egypt and Syria thoroughly. Rosario was introduced to us. Now, I ask you, does not the name at once tell you that he was a smart elegant young fellow, with a handsome face, good figure, and an insinuating address? Such is the idea which you will naturally have formed of a Maltese named Rosario Villa. Stop a moment till I have described him. He is a little elderly man with a body as dried and shrivelled as a reindeer's tongue, only not so fresh-coloured—for his face is of the hue of the inside of tanned shoe-leather, but wrinkled over like a New Zealand mummy; a low forehead, a mouth made of two narrow strips of skin drawn back nearly to the ear over white teeth, and with his hair cut close, but leaving a little fringe of stragglers round the front—such is the picture of Rosario! We had no time to be fastidious, and his character being unquestionable, we

engaged him at once, and in two hours he had made all his worldly arrangements and was on the way at our side to the steamboat. Here he was met by his friends and acquaintances, who took leave of him with many embraces, and I could not doubt that the soul was good which drew the kisses at his parting to such a body! 1836. ÆT. 32.

"It was five o'clock in the evening and the sun was beginning to prepare to leave this latitude for your western lands, when we slipped out of the boat upon the quay of Alexandria. A scene followed which I must endeavour to describe. Our luggage and that of an Irish friend was brought from the boat and deposited on a kind of platform immediately in front of a shed, which is ennobled by the name of Custom-House. Upon a bench, a little raised, sat a fat little Turk with a broad square face, whose fat cheeks hung down in pendulous masses on each side of his mouth, after the fashion of the English mastiff dog shown as a specimen in the Zoological Gardens. Our servant Rosario has endeavoured to hire a camel to put our luggage upon, but there is none at hand. A crowd of Arab porters has gathered about, offering their services, and each is talking at the top of his voice; after due bargaining, or rather jostling, haggling, and gesticulating, the agreement is concluded, and a dozen of the shortest of the *hammals* or porters have proceeded to adjust their several portions of the luggage, when whack, crack, thwack, a terrible rout is here!

"The little fat Turk whom I verily believe to have been dreaming as he sat so tranquilly smoking his long pipe, whose glowing ashes had the moment before attracted my eye by its glare in the advancing twilight, has caused this panic. Throwing aside his chibouque, and grasping a short cane, without troubling himself to speak a word, he has rushed with the suddenness of inspiration into the midst of

1836. Ær. 32. the screaming and litigious gang, and plying his baton right and left over the shoulders, head, and arms, dealing out an extra share of chastisement upon those who, from having been loaded with our chattels, could not so easily escape his fury, until he has cleared the ground of every turbaned rogue of them, and left us standing amidst our scattered and disordered trunks, bags, and portmanteaus, not knowing what was to follow. I am soon able, however, to guess what is at the bottom the meaning of this unexpected apparition of the little dignitary, and the sudden Hegira of our porters; for after calmly resuming his pipe, and giving it two or three inspirations to reanimate the decaying embers, he takes Rosario on one side and whispers a few words in his ear, the import of which you may suppose is that the luggage must all go to the custom-house, but to save us that trouble he will allow us in consideration of some backshish (or a present of money) to take them with us.

"This little difficulty being got over, our luggage and ourselves are under weigh through the dark streets of Alexandria, whose houses appear to have rudely turned their back premises to the front, for you can see nothing but blank walls without windows or doors. The English hotel lay at some distance, and we had occasion to pass through one of the gates of the town, where we were met by a guard, a fellow in a white turban, who laid violent hands upon the leader of our party, who happened to be the good doctor himself, and arrested our further progress under some pretence which I could not comprehend, but I distinctly again caught the sound of the word *backshish*. We hesitated whether we should give the rascal a shilling or a good beating;—the doctor had raised his heavy umbrella in favour of the latter alternative, when my vote, which you know is always in favour of peace, decided it in behalf of a

fee, to the extent of five piastres, and with this subsidy to the Pacha's representative we departed amicably. On the way through the narrow streets of Alexandria we met many Turks, whose attendants bore small lamps of paper or gauze, with which they always politely showed us our road. I begin to think that these are well-bred barbarians, after all my abuse of them and their religion! 1836. ÆT. 32.

"Mrs Hume's hotel is a large detached building situated a long distance from the Turkish quarter, and surrounded by date-trees of luxuriant growth. I ran out and wandered here by moonlight the very night of my arrival. The scene was indeed delicious after a tedious and unpleasant voyage. I thought of you all, and only wished for one of you at least to share my exciting enjoyment. Well has it been said that '*happiness was born a twin*,' and you, my dear M., somehow or other seem naturally associated with me in my ideal pleasures. I fancied that you were with me, and that we were equally happy.

"When I arose in the morning, I found that it was the season for gathering the dates. The Arabs were swinging about in the branches of this elegant tree by means of ropes, and gathering in large baskets the ripe fruit, which hung in luxuriant bunches. I am an admirer of the useful, you know, but how much more do I love the combination of utility and elegance! On the date-tree you find both in perfection. There is the handsomest tree in the world, bearing the sole fruit which afforded nourishment to the wandering children of the desert, and a charming fruit is the date. I have subscribed a trifle to the Turk who rents this plantation, for the privilege of walking through it, whenever I please, and helping myself freely to its produce. There are very few curiosities to detain the traveller in Alexandria. Pompey's Pillar, and Cleopatra's Needle, and the catacombs, and a few other half-buried ruins

1836. are all that now remains to attest the ancient splendour of a
ÆT. 32. city which once contained 4000 baths, and counted a population of 600,000 souls. These curious fragments of departed grandeur have been often described, and are so little *intrinsically* interesting, that I shall say nothing about them.

"The monuments called Cleopatra's Needles are enormous masses of granite. One only stands, the other was thrown down and half buried in the sand in an attempt to remove it to England. Mark the folly and injustice of carrying these remains from the site where they were originally placed, and from amidst the associations which gave them all their interest, to London or Paris, where they become merely objects of vulgar wonderment, and besides are subjected to the destroying effects of our humid climate. It is to be hoped that good taste, or at least the feelings of economy which now pervade our rulers' minds, will prevent this vestige of the days of the Pharaohs from being removed.[6]

"I dined with Mr. Muir at twelve o'clock. His Greek servant, a man of remarkable elegance and gracefulness, quiet, grave, and full of dignity at every gesture. What a power such grace has over my mind!"[7]

[6] Théophile Gautier makes the Paris obelisk muse in Cobden's sense:—

Sur cette place je m'ennuie,
Obélisque dépareillé;
Neige, givre, bruine, et pluie
Glacent mon flanc déjà rouillé;

Et ma vieille aiguille, rougie
Aux fournaises d'un ciel de feu,
Prend des pâleurs de nostalgie
Dans cet air qui n'est jamais bleu.

La sentinelle granitique,
Gardienne des énormités,
Se dresse entre un faux temple antique
Et la chambre des députés.

And so forth.

[7] *Journal.*

Cairo, Dec. 20, 1836.—"I slept tolerably well after having been for the first time made acquainted with my old torment, the fleas. You will wonder when I tell you that use has since made me almost indifferent to such trifles. The Arab sailors who formed our crew were miserable wretches, half clothed in dirty rags, and two of them were suffering from ophthalmia. I had heard much of the character of the degraded population of Egypt, and was told by those who knew no better, that severity and harshness were the only methods of making them work. My idea is, you know, that rewards and not punishments are the most effectual means of stimulating men, and so it proved. The *backshish* kept the boat going, when stripes would have only made it stand. At Atfeh we paid the *reis* or captain his five dollars, and gave his men a few piastres, and I parted with my usual good opinion of human nature.

"Scarcely had we reached the shore, when we were followed by the *reis*, bringing three bad pieces of money which he accused the good doctor, the cashier, of having paid him. It was clearly an imposition, and Rosario told us we should encounter similar conduct at every stage. We changed the money, resolving to be on our guard in future. *My ideas of human nature were less exalted for a minute and a half than usual.*

"To proceed from Atfeh to Cairo, a distance of 150 miles by the Nile, it was necessary to embark on board a larger boat, but here we found that the ladies, who had just preceded us, had taken all the good boats. We learnt, however, that a new and commodious boat was lying at the town of Fooah on the opposite side of the river, rather higher up the stream, and we took a ferry, and carried our luggage over, accompanied by the Vice-Consul, a little Italian, who, politely as we thought, agreed to bargain for us. The boat with twelve men was hired for 500 piastres,

1836. Æt. 32. or 5*l.*, and it was agreed that we should start as soon as our luggage was on board. In the meantime I went into a cotton-mill in the neighbourhood, which presented a miserable appearance. Upon leaving, I gave *backshish* to one of the managers, who followed me immediately with a bad piece of money, which he accused me of having paid him. I threatened to shoot him, or something equally improbable, and thus escaped this attempt. Our Vice-Consul now left us, and we proposed to start, but the owner of the boat very coolly ordered a cargo of wood to be laid alongside, which he was determined to take along with its owner to Cairo. As this would have left no room for Rosario or Hussein for sleeping, we resisted, and all began to grow out of humour. We threw the wood out of the boat, and drove the porters, who were attempting to load, ashore. A fresh difficulty now arose. The owner of the boat refused to let her start until the next day, and very soon all the crew, *reis* and all, disappeared. *My opinion of humanity sank several degrees.* It now grew towards evening. We were moored alongside of the town of Fooah, and just opposite to a khan or coffee-house, in the balcony of which sat the owner of the boat, smoking his long pipe and surrounded by a party of lazy rascals like himself, who were all singing and laughing, probably amused at our dilemma. Much as it is against my principles, I now resorted to brute force. I took the pistols out of the portmanteau where Fred had placed them loaded and primed, but not without secret resolves that I would not injure any one. The doctor also arrived, and we went ashore to find the governor of the town, intending to make a complaint. It was dark, and we had a difficulty in finding out that the principal officer of Fooah was from home, but on inquiry for his deputy, we were told that the owner of the boat against whom we complained, was the man himself! Thus the judge and criminal were one person, which was certainly against

our cause. However, we proceeded straight to the khan, and by means of Rosario for an interpreter, we made the vice-governor understand that he was a rascal, and threatened to have him punished by our friend the Pacha. He protested that he only acted for the safety of ourselves; that the Vice-Consul had entrusted us to his charge as travellers of the first consideration; that the sky predicted a storm; and that he could not, out of regard for such valuable lives, suffer us to go out that night. So finding there was no help for our difficulties but in patience and submission, we went on board, laughed at ourselves, supped, and slept."

"In the morning (Sunday, December 4th,) we started with a favourable wind up the Nile. On looking round, however, we found that we had only six sailors instead of twelve, and we now learnt that this was the reason why the boat could not venture out at night. We found also from our man, Hussein, that the Vice-Consul had received a handsome backshish out of the 5*l.* we were to pay for the boat. Altogether my opinion of the Egyptians received a smart shock —they were *for an hour or so* down at zero. The aspect of the scenery of the Nile at and above Fooah, though flat, was very interesting to us at first. The minarets in the distance, the palms on the banks, the brilliant foliage, all gave it a pleasant effect to a stranger to such scenes. The river, which is of a yellow-red complexion, is here of the width of the Thames at London."

"This day (December 16th,) is an era in my travels. I went with Captain E. and Mr. Hill to see the Pyramids. They disappoint the visitor until he gets close to them. My first feelings, along with a due sense of astonishment, were those of vexation at the enormous sum of ingenious labour which here was wasted. Six millions of tons of stone, all shaped and fitted with skill, are here piled in a useless form. The third of this weight of material and less than a tenth

1836. part of the labour sufficed to construct the most useful
ÆT. 32. public work in England—the Plymouth Breakwater."[8]

Cairo, December 20th, 1836.—"Last evening was the interesting time appointed for an interview with no less a personage than Mehemet Ali, the Pacha of Egypt. Our Consul, Colonel C.,[9] had the day before waited upon this celebrated person, to say that he wished to present some British travellers to his Highness, and he appointed the following evening at six o'clock, which is his usual hour of receiving visitors during the fast of Ramadan. At the appointed hour we assembled, to the number of six individuals, at the house of Colonel C., and from thence we immediately proceeded to the palace, which is in the citadel, and about half an hour's ride from the Consul's.

"Our way lay through the most crowded part of the town. It was quite dark, but being at the season of the Ramadan (the Mahommedan Lent) when Turks fast and abstain from business during the day, but feast and illuminate their bazaars and public buildings during the night, we found the streets lighted up, and all the population apparently just beginning the day's occupations. . . . Away we went through streets and bazaars, some of which were less than eight feet wide, and all of them being crowded with Turks, Arabs, camels, horses, and donkeys. All, however, made way at the approach of the janissary and the uplifted grate of fire, both of which are signs of the rank of the persons who followed. Besides, to do justice even to Turks, I must add that I never saw a people less disposed to quarrel with you about trifles than the population of Cairo. You may run over them, or pummel them with your feet, as you squeeze them almost to death against the wall, and they

[8] *Journal.*

[9] "A martinet taken from the regimental mess, to watch and regulate the commercial intercourse of a trading people with a merchant pacha."—*Journal.*

only seem astonished that you give yourself any concern 1836.
afterwards, to know if they be still in the land of the living. Æt. 32.
As for the foot of an ass or dromedary, if it be placed gently on their toes, and only withdrawn in time for them to light their pipe or say their prayers, which are the only avocations they follow, why, they say nothing about such trifles.

"As we proceeded along the streets, or rather alleys, of this singular city, it was curious to observe the doings of the good Mussulmans, who had just an hour before been released from the observance of the severe ordinance of the prophet. Some were busy cooking their savoury stews over little charcoal fires; here you might see a party seated round a dish, into which every individual was actively thrusting his fist; and occasionally we passed a public fountain, around the doors and windows of which crowds of half-famished true believers were pressing, eager to quench their thirst, probably for the first time since sunrise. Some, who no doubt had already satisfied the more pressing calls of nature, were seated round a company of musicians, and listening with becoming gravity to strains of barbarous music, whilst in another place a crowd of turbans had gathered about a juggler, who was exercising the credulity of the faithful by his magical deceptions. By far the greater portion, however, of those we passed were sitting cross-legged, enjoying the everlasting pipe, and so intent were they upon the occupation that they scarcely deigned to cast a glance at us as we passed.

"As we approached nearer to the citadel, the scene changed. We now met numbers of military of all ranks who were issuing from the head-quarters, some accoutred for the night watch, others dressed in splendid suits and mounted upon spirited horses. I saw some officers in the Mameluke costume, which you may see pictured in old books of travel in this country. Contrasted with these was the dress of the

1836. Æt. 32. private troops who led the way, and whose white cotton garments, close jacket, and musket with bayonet, gave them a half European aspect. Here too we found ourselves surrounded by numerous horsemen, who like ourselves were proceeding at this, his customary hour of levée, to pay their respects to the Pacha. At length we entered the gates of the citadel, and immediately the road assumed a steep winding character admirably adapted for the purposes of defence. On each side, as we advanced, we found ourselves enclosed by lofty walls, and, by the light of the burning grate of pine-wood which was raised aloft in our van, I could distinguish the embrasures and loop-holes for musketry. I shuddered as I thought of the massacre of the Mamelukes, which was perpetrated near this very spot, a deed unparalleled in the annals of the world for perfidious and cold-blooded atrocity.

"The circumstances of the massacre are briefly these. Mehemet Ali having by a series of daring attacks, and aided by much cunning artifice, deposed the Mameluke rulers who had governed Egypt for more than seven centuries, and placed himself upon the throne of the country, made a kind of capitulation with the fallen chiefs, by which he agreed to give them support and protection. In consequence they came to reside in great numbers in Cairo, where they conducted themselves peaceably. On the occasion of a fête in honour of his son, the Pacha invited the Mamelukes to attend and assist at the festivities.[1] They entered the palace of the citadel, to the number of 470, dressed in their gorgeous and picturesque costume, but without arms. Mehemet Ali received them with smiles, and it was remarked that he was more than usually courteous. They departed, their hearts lighted up with a glow by his affability, and proceeded in a gay procession down

[1] The massacre of the Mamelukes took place on March 1, 1811.

to the gate which we had just passed; it was closed; as the first victim reached the gate, a hundred discharges of musketry from the walls on each side opened upon them. They turned to retreat, but the gate behind was also closed, and they were fast in the toils of their betrayer and destroyer. Only one man is said to have escaped, who rode his horse up a steep bank, and forced him over the battlement and into a gulf seventy feet deep below. The horse was killed, but the rider escaped, and made his way to Europe. Such is the substance of a deed of blood which had no provocation, no state necessity, nor a semblance even of justice, to palliate its unmitigated character of treachery, and yet here am I—I recollected with emotions of shame—passing over the scene of such a bloody tragedy, to do obeisance to the principal actor!

"The citadel is in extent and appearance something like a considerable town. As we proceeded through the steep and winding avenue, we came upon a thoroughfare lighted up like a bazaar with shops or stalls on each side, before which the soldiers were loitering and buying fruit or other articles from the lazy dealers, who sat cross-legged upon their mats, enveloped in tobacco smoke. Having passed under another gateway, and along a winding arched passage of massive masonry, an abrupt turning or two brought us to a large open square, the opposite sides of which were lighted up. Here as we approached the centre of power from whence all rank, wealth, and authority are derived in this region of despotism, the throng of military of all ranks became more dense, just as the rays of light or the circles of water are closest where the heat or motion which gives them existence has its origin. We dismounted at the principal entrance and found ourselves in a hall, which, with the stairs that we immediately ascended, was almost impassable for the crowds of military who lounged and loitered in no very orderly

1836. manner by the way. At the head of the stairs we entered
ÆT. 32. a very large hall, which presented a curious spectacle. Along its whole length and breadth, with only just sufficient interval towards one of the sides to afford room for passing to a door at the farther extremity, were seen cross-legged upon the floor, on little mats, an immense number of Turkish and Arab soldiers, whose arms and slippers were lying beside them. We passed along the entire length of the large room, too quickly to allow of more than a moment's surprise at the scene before us, when entering another apartment we found ourselves in a great, lofty chamber, from the centre of which hung a chandelier holding probably twenty yellowish-white wax candles, and in the centre of the floor stood a row of four gigantic silver candlesticks like those used in Catholic chapels, and each holding a huge candle of four feet in length, and a proportionate diameter. By their united light we could very indistinctly see to the extremities of the room, from whose farthest corner one or two persons hastily retired as we entered, leaving us, as I thought, alone in this huge apartment.

"Colonel C., who preceded our party a few steps, now bowed towards the farthest corner of the room—a movement which we all imitated as we followed. A dozen steps brought my feet close to the bowl of a long, superbly enriched pipe which rested in a little pan on the floor, the other extremity of which was held by a short and rather fat personage, who was seated alone just to the right of the corner of the room upon a broad and soft divan, which ran round the apartment like a continual sofa. He laid aside his pipe, uttered several times a sentence, which we guessed was an expression of welcome, from its being delivered in a good-natured and affable tone, and accompanied at each repetition by the motion of his hands, as he pointed with more of hurry

than dignity to the divan on each side of him, as signs for us to be seated. The colonel took his place to the right, and the rest of the party sat down upon the divan in the order in which they were standing. It chanced that I was placed immediately to his left, and thus I found myself quite close, or at least as near as I desire ever to be, to Mehemet Ali! It happened that at the moment of our arrival the dragoman or interpreter was not in attendance, and therefore as soon as we were seated a slight embarrassment ensued. The Pacha did not appear in the least ruffled by the neglect of his officer; he looked towards the door, called for somebody, but not impatiently; then turned to the colonel, uttered a few words, but immediately laughed as if at the recollection of his not being understood. Again he turned his eye towards the door, called in a louder but still not angry tone for some person, but nobody appearing, he then turned to Colonel C. and to us, smiled, fidgetted on his seat, rubbed his knee, and twisted the fingers of a remarkably white and handsome little hand in the handle of his sword. All this was but the affair of a minute or two, when an attendant of apparent rank entered, and walked quickly up to the Pacha, who appeared to explain good-humouredly the nature of our predicament, and he instantly began the duty of interpreting. The Pacha commenced the conversation by offering us a welcome; upon this the colonel made an observation about the weather, which however excusable it might have been in a country where Englishmen have adopted it as the habit of introducing themselves, is little suited to this latitude, where uninterrupted sunshine prevails for seven years together. Let me leave the speakers to settle the preliminaries of their interview, whilst in the meantime I describe a little more minutely the principal character before me.

"Mehemet Ali is, I am told, about five feet six or seven

1836. inches high, but as he now sat beside me, sunk deeply in a
ÆT. 32. soft divan, he did not appear even so tall; he was plainly dressed in a dark and simple suit, and wore the red fez or tarboosh cap, which is now generally substituted for the turban by men of rank. His features are regular and good, and his face might be called handsome, but being somewhat rounded by fatness, I shall use the term comely as more expressive of its character. His beard is quite white, but I have seen many amongst his subjects with richer-looking tufts upon their chins. I glanced at the form of his head, which is, as far as I could discern through its cover, confirmatory of the science of phrenology—its huge size according with the extraordinary force of character displayed by this successful soldier, whilst a broad and massive forehead harmonizes with the powerful intellect he has displayed in his schemes of personal aggrandizement. Yet upon the whole there is nothing extraordinary or striking in the countenance of Mehemet Ali. He appeared to me like a good-humoured man, and had I been called upon at a cursory glance to give an opinion upon such a person in a private station, I might have pronounced him an amiable and jocular fellow! However as I was seated beside an extraordinary person, it was natural that I should scrutinize the expression of his features with the hope, nay the determination, of finding something more than common in his physiognomy. In doing so I encountered his dark eye several times, and thought it did not improve upon closer acquaintance. His mouth, too, which is almost concealed beneath his white moustachio, seemed only to pretend to smile; and once or twice I observed that whilst the lips were putting on the semblance of laughter, his eye was busily glancing round from under its heavy brows, with anything but an expression of unguarded mirth. If the eye do not reveal the human character, it will be vain to look for it in the more ignoble

features of the countenance, and the constant workings of this 'mirror of the soul' alone revealed the restless spirit of Mehemet Ali. I never beheld a more unquiet eye than his, as it glided from one to another of the persons around him; it was incessantly in motion. Its glance, however, had none of that overpowering character which beams only from the soul of real genius;—there was neither moral nor intellectual grandeur in the look of the person before me, and I could not help thinking, as he stole furtive glances first at us and next at the door, that that eye might have been employed in watching the store of his *quondam* tobacco shop from the pilfering hands of his Albanian countrymen, with greater appropriateness than in now looking down upon us from the divan of a pacha.[1]

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"Altogether there was as little dignity as possibly can be conceived in the personal appearance of Mehemet. Were I to confess what were the feelings which predominated in my mind as I regarded him whilst he sat, or rather perched, upright on the middle of the divan, without resting or reclining upon its pillows, and with his legs tucked beneath him, so as to leave only his slippers peeping out from each side of his copious nether garments, they certainly partook largely of the ridiculous.

"Coffee was brought to us in little cups enclosed in covers of filagree-work made of silver, and which I was afterwards told by one of the party (I did not myself notice them) was richly set with diamonds.

"When the first civilities had passed, the Pacha, as if impatient of unmeaning puerilities, took up the conversation with an harangue of considerable length, which he delivered with great animation. I felt curious to know what was the

[1] Mehemet Ali, the founder of the present system of government in Egypt, was born in 1768 at a small town on the Albanian coast, of an obscure family. For some years he dealt in tobacco, and he was thirty years old or more before he effectively began his military career.

1836. subject which seemed to possess so much interest with the
ÆT. 32. practical mind of the Pacha. Judge then of my astonishment when I found that the burden of his discourse was *cotton!* The speaker was boasting of the richness and fertility of his territory, and to illustrate the productiveness of Egypt, he gave us an account of the harvest of a particular village in his favourite article of cotton: he entered into a minute calculation of the population, number of acres, the weight of the produce, the cost of raising, and the value in the market, and then gave a glowing picture of the wealth and prosperity of this village, which bore no resemblance to any place ever seen by myself or any other traveller in his miserable country. It was certainly the most audacious puff ever practised upon the credulity of an audience, when Mehemet Ali vaunted the happiness and wealth of some 'sweet Auburn' in his wretched and oppressed Pachalick. In reply to his statement, which savoured so little of truth that I thought it harmonized completely with the false expression of the lips which uttered it, the Consul directed the Pacha's attention to the gentleman immediately to his left, who was from Manchester in England, and whom he described to be better acquainted than any person present with the subject he was speaking upon. At this remark, he turned sharply round, and directed a look towards me, in which, as in every glance of his eye, suspicion and cunning predominated. He paused for a moment, and the Colonel, not knowing whether his hesitation arose from having imperfectly understood him, repeated in substance his observation, and explained that Manchester was the chief seat of the British manufacture, and that Liverpool was the port by which the materials reached that place. Mehemet Ali had not apparently ever heard of either of these cities. There was another pause of half a minute, and a slight embarrassment in his manner (I

was told by one of the party afterwards that it appeared as though a slight flush came over his face at the same instant), when he abruptly changed the topic of conversation, and began to talk of his navy. I was puzzled at the moment to divine the cause why the Pacha shunned a discussion about his favourite cotton; it afterward occurred to me, and the idea was confirmed by the opinions of others of the party, that he avoided talking on a subject on which he was conscious that he had greatly exaggerated, with one whom he believed, from the too favourable account of the Consul, to be better informed than himself.

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"The Pacha now proceeded to maintain stoutly that the quality of his Syrian pines was equal to that of British oak for the purposes of ship-building. There was nothing remarkable in the conversation that followed, excepting the practical shrewdness which characterized the choice and handling of his subjects on the part of Mehemet Ali. After an interview of about half an hour, in which, from the defective tact and address of Colonel C., no person of the party but himself took any share, we made our parting salutations, and retired from the audience-chamber, which, as I again traversed it, I thought was on a par with a ball-room in a second-rate English country town. On proceeding through the large anteroom, we found the company listening to the address of their spiritual guide. On our way down the declivity from the citadel we passed the menagerie, and I heard the lion growling in his den. I thought of Mehemet Ali."

Cobden had another interview with Mehemet Ali on December 26, in which they had an hour's conversation on the Pacha's way of managing his cotton factories. He confesses himself to have been particularly struck with the Pacha's readiness in replying and reasoning, with his easy handling of his 2½ per cents. and 20 per cents., and with his

1836. "love of facts and quickness of calculation." "It is this
ÆT. 32. calculating talent, aided by higher powers of combination and reflection, that has contributed so greatly towards elevating him to his present position; for whatever daring or courage he may have shown upon emergencies, it is notorious that he has always preferred the use of diplomacy to the more open tactics of the sword."

Cairo, Dec. 22nd, 1836.—"Mehemet Ali is pursuing a course of avaricious misrule, which would have torn the vitals from a country less prolific than this, long since. As it is, everything is decaying beneath his system of monopolies. It is difficult to understand the condition of things in Egypt without visiting it. The Pacha has, by dint of force and fraud, possessed himself of the whole of the property of the country. I do not mean that he has obtained merely the rule or government, but he *owns* the whole of the soil, the houses, the boats, the camels, etc. There is something quite unique in finding only one landowner and one merchant in a country, in the person of its pacha! He has been puffed by his creatures in Europe as a regenerator and a reformer—*I can trace in him only a rapacious tyrant.* It is true he has, to gratify an insatiate ambition, attempted to give himself a European fame, by importing some of the arts of civilized countries into Egypt; but this has been done, not to benefit his people, but to exalt himself. His cotton factories are a striking instance of this. I have devoted some time to the inspection of these places, of which I am surprised to find there are twenty-eight in the country, altogether presenting a waste of capital and industry unparalleled in any other part of the world. Magnificent buildings have been erected, costly machinery brought from England and France, and the whole after a few years presents such an appearance of dilapidation and mismanagement that to persevere in carrying them forwards must be

to incur fresh ruin every year. At first, steam-engines were put down at the principal mills; but these were soon stopped, and bullock-wheels were substituted, which are now in use at all the establishments! I saw them carding with engines almost toothless; the spinning, which is of low numbers, running from 12 to 40, is of the worst possible kind; and, in weaving, the lumps and knots keep the poor weaver in constant activity cutting and patching his web. There is one mill, built at the side of the river, which presents a splendid appearance as you approach from Alexandria; it contains the finest room-full of Sharp and Roberts's looms that I ever saw. The engine of this does not work, and they have therefore turned these power-looms into hand-looms, and are making cloth that could not be sold at any price in Manchester. All this waste is going on with the best raw cotton, which ought to be sold with us, and double its weight of Surats bought for the manufacturer of such low fabrics. This is not all the mischief, for the very hands that are driven into these manufactures are torn from the cultivation of the soil, which is turned into desert for want of cultivation, whilst it might be the most fertile in the world. But the most splendid of all his buildings is the print-works. Think of a couple of block shops, each nearly a hundred yards long and fifteen feet high; imagine a croft enclosed with solid walls, containing nearly fifty acres, and conceive this to be intersected with streams of water in all directions, and with taps for letting on the water at any particular place; think of such a place, compared with which ours or the best of the Lancashire works are but as barns, and then what do you say when I tell you that one of these block-shops contained about fifteen tables at work, whilst in the other the tables were all piled up in one corner, and the only occupants of it were a couple of carpet-weavers trying to produce a hearth-rug! All this

1836. is not the work of Mehemet Ali. The miserable adven-
ÆT. 32. turers from Europe, who have come here to act the parasites of such a blood-stained despot—they are partly the cause of the evil. But they know his selfish nature, and his lust of fame, and this is only their mode of deluding the one and pandering to the other."[3]

1837. On the 19th of January Cobden left Alexandria, and
ÆT. 33. arrived at Constantinople on the 1st of February:—

On board the Sardinian Brig, La Virtu, in the Sea of Marmora, Jan. 29th, 1837.—"On the 24th we found ourselves becalmed under the island of Scio, the most fertile and the largest of the Archipelago. In the evening the moon rose, and diffused over the atmosphere, not merely a light, but a blaze, which illuminated the hills and vales of Scio, and shed a rosy tint over every object in the island. The sea was as tranquil as the land, and everything seemed to whisper security and repose. How different was the scene on this very island twelve years ago, when the Turks burst in upon a cultivated, wealthy, and contented population, and spread death and destruction through the land, changing in one short day this paradise of domestic happiness into a theatre of the most appalling crimes. I must recall to your minds the particulars of this dreadful tragedy. Scio had taken no part in the revolution of the Greeks, and its inhabitants, who were industrious and rich, voluntarily placed hostages of their chief men in the hands of the Turkish Government, as a proof that they were not disposed to rebel against their rulers. It happened, however, that some young men of the neighbouring islands of Samos and Ipsara landed at one extremity of the island, and there planted the standard of revolt, which, however, was not followed by the Sciotes. On the contrary, they protested against it; and, as they had delivered up their arms as a proof of their peaceful inten-

[3] *To Mr. George Foster*, from Cairo, December 22, 1836.

tions, they could do no more. The pretence, however, was seized upon by the Government of Constantinople, and the island was doomed to a visit from the Turkish Admiral, and a body of ruffianly troops who were promised a free licence of blood and plunder. 1837. ÆT. 33.

"The riches of the island, the beauty and accomplishments of the females, were held out as inducements to draw all the ruffians of the capital to join in the expedition of rapine and murder. The situation of the island, too, afforded the opportunity of passing from the mainland across a narrow strait of about seven miles, and thousands of the miscreants from all the towns of the coast of Asia Minor, including Smyrna, flocked to the scene of woe. Now only picture to yourselves such a scene as the Isle of Wight, supposing it to be one third more populous and larger in circumference, and then imagine that its inhabitants in the midst of unsuspecting security were suddenly burst upon by 20,000 of the butchers, porters, thieves, and desperadoes of London, Portsmouth, etcetera. Imagine these for three days in unbridled possession of the persons and property of every soul in that happy island; conceive all the churches filled with mangled corpses, the rich proprietors hanging dead at their own house doors, the ministers of religion cruelly tortured—imagine all that could happen from the knives, swords, and pistols of men who were inured to blood, and suppose the captivity and sufferings of every young female or male, who were without exception torn away and sold into captivity;—and you will not then picture a quarter part of the horrors which happened at the massacre of Scio. Of nearly 100,000 persons on the island in the month of May, not more than 700 were left alive there at the end of two months after. Upwards of 40,000 young persons of both sexes were sold into infamous slavery throughout all the Mahometan cities of Europe and Asia, and not one

1837. house was left standing except those of the European
Æt. 33. Consuls!"

Constantinople, February 14th, 1837.—"Do not expect a long or rhapsodical letter from me, for I am at the moment of writing both cold and cross. A copper pan of charcoal is beside me, to which I cannot apply for warmth, because it gives me the headache. There is a hole in the roof, which lets down a current of melted snow, which trickles over my bed and spatters one corner of the table on which I am writing. To complete the agreeable position of the writer, he is lodging in a house where the good man (albeit a tailor!) has a child of every age, from the most disagreeable and annoying of all ages—eighteen months—upwards to ten. My landlady is a bustling little Greek, with a shrill voice which is never tired; but I seldom hear it, because, as her children are generally in full chorus during the whole day, it is only when they are in bed and she takes advantage of the calm to scold her husband, that her *solo* notes are distinguishable. But you will say that I have very little occasion to spend my time indoors, surrounded as I am by the beauties of Constantinople. Alas! if I sally out, the streets are choked with snow and water; the thoroughfares, which are never clean, are now a thousand times worse than Hanging Ditch or Deansgate in the middle of December. If one walks close to the houses, then there are projecting windows from the fronts which just serve to pour an incessant stream of water down on your head and neck; if, to escape drowning, he goes into the middle of the street, then the passenger is up to his knees every step, and sometimes by chance he plunges into a hole of mud and water from which he must emerge by the charity of some good Turk or Christian. Then, to complete the picture of misery, every man or woman you meet dodges you in order to escape contagion, and it would be as difficult

almost in Pera, the Frank quarter, to touch a person, as if the whole population were playing a game of prisoner's base. With this multitude of miseries to encounter without and within doors, I have seen little here to amuse or gratify me; and if it were not for the extreme kindness of all the merchants here, with almost all of whom I have dined or visited; and if I had not had other objects in view than merely to see this city and neighbourhood, I should scarcely have stayed a week at Constantinople. The plague has been more than commonly destructive; various accounts give from 50 to 100,000 deaths, and I have little doubt that more than one eighth of the population has been swept away. I must, however, tell you for your satisfaction that it has now almost disappeared, and that it has quite lost its virulence. Fortunately, the very day of my arrival a north wind set in, and brought with it the snows and frosts of the Black Sea, against which the pestilence could not exist. Had I arrived a week earlier, the weather was as mild as summer. That would have given me a better opportunity of seeing the country, but not with the same security from the plague as at present. As I entered the harbour of Constantinople, the country was free from snow, and therefore I saw the view to pretty good advantage considering that it was the winter-time. It is too fine, too magical, for description, and all the accounts that you read of it do not do justice to it."

Smyrna, Feb. 24th, 1837.—"After I wrote to you from Constantinople, I made an excursion up the Bosphorus to see the scenery which all concur in praising as the most beautiful in Europe. I wish I had seen it before I landed in Turkey; —the misery, the dirt, the plague, and all the other disagreeables of Constantinople, haunted me even in the quiet and solitude of natural beauties which, apart from such associations, are certainly enough to excite the romantic fervour

1837. of the most chilly-hearted. From these causes I am afraid
ÆT. 33. I have not done justice to the scene of the Bosphorus. I could not look upon the palaces, the kiosks, and wooden houses which crowded the banks of the beautiful channel with the interest which they might have imparted, if I had not known the poverty, vice, and tyranny of their possessors. Must I confess it? I think the Hudson river a much more beautiful scene than the Bosphorus. But let the scenes be reversed—if the Bosphorus were in the United States, and the Hudson in Turkey—and I should consider probably the former incomparably the most beautiful; so much are we the creatures of association."[4]

Smyrna, Feb. 24th, 1837.—"In the steamer which brought me from Constantinople to this place, we had a great number of passengers, chiefly Turks: there were a few Persians. They all rested on deck during the whole time. For their convenience little raised platforms were placed along each side of the steamer, to prevent the wet, if any rain fell,

[4] In the pamphlet on *England, Ireland, and America,* Cobden had already indulged a joyous vision of what Constantinople might become under the genius of a free government:—"Constantinople, outrivalling New York, may be painted, with a million of free citizens, as the focus of all the trade of Eastern Europe. Let us conjure up the thousands of miles of railroads, carrying to the very extremities of this empire—not the sanguinary satrap, but the merchandise and the busy traders of a free state; conveying—not the firman of a ferocious Sultan, armed with death to the trembling slave, but the millions of newspapers and letters, which stimulate the enterprise and excite the patriotism of an enlightened people. Let us imagine the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmora swarming with steamboats, connecting the European and Asiatic continents by hourly departures and arrivals; or issuing from the Dardanelles, to reanimate once more with life and fertility the hundred islands of the Archipelago; or conceive the rich shores of the Black Sea in the power of the New Englander, and the Danube pouring down its produce on the plains of Moldavia and Wallachia, now subject to the plough of the hardy Kentuckian. Let us picture the Carolinians, the Virginians, and the Georgians transplanted to the coasts of Asia Minor, and behold its hundreds of cities again bursting from the tomb of ages, to recall religion and civilization to the spot from whence they first issued forth upon the world. Alas! that this should only be an illusion of the fancy!"

reaching their beds. Hereon they spread their mats and arranged their cloaks, and it was amusing to watch each drawing forth his long pipe, and preparing with the aid of a bag of tobacco to sustain the fatigues and sufferings of two nights' exposure in such a position. These Turks are the most quiet and orderly people in the world when their religious fanaticism is untouched, in which case they are at once changed into the most sanguinary savages imaginable. Some of our passengers were people of good quality, with servants accompanying them, and they slept in the cabin; but the whole of the day was spent in reposing upon their mats, their legs tucked under, and their long pipes in their mouths. A few words sometimes were exchanged, but the conversation seemed always to be a secondary affair to the enjoyment of the pipe.

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"I found great amusement in walking up and down the deck between these rows of quiet, grave Mussulmans, whose picturesque dresses and arms of various kinds afforded me constant interest; whilst the honest Turks felt equal amusement in ruminating over their pipes upon the motives which could cause a Giaour like me to set myself the task of walking to and fro on the deck for nothing that they could understand, unless for some religious penance. There were two old men with green turbans, who five times during the day put aside their pipes, turning to the east, and, bowing their foreheads to their feet, uttered with great fervour their prayers. All this passed unnoticed by their very next neighbours—for the Turks are not (what nurses say of children) arrived at the age for *taking notice*. I have seen all sorts of strange scenes happen without disturbing the dreaming attention of the Turk. Once in Cairo I was looking out of a window, beneath which three smokers were sitting upon their mats: a boy was driving an ass loaded with gravel and sand, which tripped just as it was passing full trot by the

1837. place, and fell close to the smokers, upsetting the contents
ÆT. 33. of the panniers upon their mats. The boy immediately set to work shovelling up the sand with his hands, and scraping it as well as he could from amongst their legs, and having loaded his donkey, he cantered away. Not a word or look passed between him and the smokers, who never moved from their seats; and two hours afterwards I passed by them when their posture was precisely the same, and their legs were still surrounded by the remains of the load of sand!"

Smyrna, Feb. 24th, 1837.—"The house in which I am staying is a large, elegantly-furnished one, and the management is of the solid kind which Mr. Rhoades' establishment used to be characterized by.[5] Old, queer-looking servants trot about large corridors; there are rooms for Monsieur, snuggeries for Madame, little retreats for visitors, in one of which I am sitting, writing; and all have good, substantial fires. In the evening after a six o'clock dinner, parties of ladies walk in without ceremony; they and the young gentlemen of the house, with Madame W—— (who does not speak English), sit down to the faro-table, around which you soon hear a babel of tongues, English, French, Greek, and Italian, whilst Mr. W—— and I *cause* over Russian politics or political economy. One by one the company disappears, after taking a cup of coffee the size of a pigeon's egg; and so noiseless and little ceremonious are their appearances and disappearances, that a spectator would imagine the visitors to be members of the family, who joined each other from different parts of this great house to an evening's amusement, and then retired again for the night to their several apartments. This *is visiting as it should be done.*"

The following extracts from his journal may serve to show the chief topics of conversation in these very useful visits:—

Smyrna, Feb. 3rd.—"At Mr. Crespin's, in a conversation

[5] Mr. Rhoades was the husband of one of his aunts.

upon the trade of Turkey, I heard that 350,000*l.* of British 1837.
goods are now lying here for the Persian markets, full one ÆT. 33.
half of the goods that came here last year were for Persia. The Persian trade was formerly carried on principally from Bombay, or through the German fairs. At present these currents are changed. Mr. W—— says that he has been at Constantinople from seventeen to eighteen years, and he recollects when the first vessel cleared out hence for England. At present an attempt is being made to impose transit duty upon the Persian silk coming through Constantinople. The trade of France is very much diminished; query is the whole demand for Turkey greater now than forty years ago? Smyrna has declined. Wool which formerly went to France now goes to London, linseed is now exported from Turkey."

Feb. 4th.—"Again heavy snows; confined to the house during the day. In the evening I accompanied Mr. Longworth to visit Mr. Simmonds, a fine old gentleman who has spent thirty-five years in Turkey. Like almost all the residents, he is favourable to the Turks, and anxious to support them against the Russians; his experiments in farming the high lands for the first time, tolerably successful. In the course of conversation he said that last year the government sent a firman to Salonica, and intercepted the grain crops which were ready for exportation, ordering them to be delivered to its stores at ten piastres and thirty paras the kilo (about a bushel); he went to the Seraskier and complained, and advised him of the impolicy of such a step, upon which he promised to inquire into it. The government then sent its agents to purchase the grain at eleven or twelve piastres from the farmers, who, as the firman had not been withdrawn, sold it eagerly. A remonstrance, however, had been sent to the government by the farmers of the vicinity of the capital, declaring that they could not produce their grain at less than fifteen piastres the kilo. . . . It snowed all

1837. day. I remained at home, and read, and made extracts from
ÆT. 33. pamphlets, etc."

Feb. 5th.—"In the morning received a call from Mr. Perkins. He spoke of the steamer which goes in about three days to Trebizond. She sails every fifteen days, and is usually full of freight and passengers; the deck passengers pay 200 piastres, or about two pounds, cabin passengers ten pounds. She carries a great number of porters, who come to Constantinople for work, remain perhaps for six months, and then return. The goods sent to Trebizond are forwarded chiefly to Erzeroum, from whence they are distributed throughout Persia and the surrounding countries. Long-cloths and prints are the principal articles. I received a visit from Dr. Millingen.[6] Says Mr. Urquhart is Scotch, was educated at college, went out to the aid of the Greeks at their revolution, was severely wounded on two occasions, afterwards travelled for some years in Turkey, discovered 'the municipalities, direct taxation, and freedom of trade,' which were the secret preservers of Turkey. Afterwards he went to England, agitated the press, the ministers, and the king in favour of Turkey. He succeeded in making every newspaper editor and reviewer adopt his views, excepting Tait. He afterwards wrote his *Resources of Turkey*, and then his pamphlet. He was patronized by Lord Ponsonby, until he received his appointment of Secretary of Legation, when his active and personal exertions in promoting his own peculiar policy produced a coolness between them. He was sent out by the English Government to arrange the commercial treaty. He, the ambassador, and the consul are all at daggers drawn.

"There are no associations at all amongst the Turks, such as are alluded to by Urquhart, under the name of Munici-

[6] The well-known physician who attended Byron in his last illness, and who died at Constantinople last year (1878).

palities. Those amongst the rayahs have reference to the regulation of their own affairs in the manner of the English Quakers or Methodists, excepting that in their own disputes they are allowed to arbitrate without appealing to Turkish tribunals. The term, *Municipalities*, is misapplied, and only calculated to deceive. In taxing the *rayahs*, the amounts levied are arbitrary, and the only privilege the various sects possess is to raise the money in the best way they can, as a body amongst themselves, instead of the Turkish authorities coming in contact with individuals. The system was no doubt originated for the purpose of enabling the Turks to levy their imposts with greater facility. The Greeks, Armenians, Jews, etc., have no protection from these imaginary municipalities."

Feb. 7th.—"In the morning I called on Mr. Perkins, who is opposed to the belief in the regeneration of the Turks. The municipalities are aptly ridiculed in the novel of *Anastasius* (by Hope), where the Turk sits upon the ground smoking under a tree, and leaves the people of the village, where he had been sent to levy contributions, to raise the money in the best way they can. Mr. Ralli attributes the evils of Turkey to the radical vices of the institutions, to the monopolies, and above all to the depreciation of the standard of value in the money. The trade to Persia through Constantinople has increased very much, but fluctuates greatly. One year it has been probably 7 to 800,000*l.*; at another, owing to a glut, not half of that amount. But he is certain that the trade to Persia, etc., is double that of Constantinople for Turkey. In the evening I dined with Mr. Thomasset, and met Mr. Boudrey, a French gentleman of intelligence. He says the trade direct with France has nearly fallen away entirely with Turkey. Belgian, Swiss, and German fabrics have superseded those from France. No regular impost is levied by government

all through its dominions; every pacha is to raise a certain sum, and he does it in his own way. Mustapha Pacha, of Adrianople, when ordered to send a certain quantity of corn to government at a certain price, fixed 12 piastres as the value, because the Europeans would give it, and he would not let his people supply it for less. *He is an exception*, and popular."

Feb. 8th.—"In the evening I dined with Mr. Perkins and met Mr. Webster, &c. I was told that no fortunes have been made by British merchants at Constantinople; that the business is so insecure, and that they are beginning to wish for the Russians, more money being made by the residents at Odessa."

Feb. 9th.—"Mr. Cartwright, the consul, called. In speaking of trade to Persia, he said that, previous to 1790, the commerce went by way of Aleppo, where there were twenty-eight English houses. The shipments were made at two seasons of the year, in six large vessels to Scanderoon, or Ladikiyeh, where there were large warehouses for depôts. After that epoch the stream of commerce went in the direction of Bombay for the lower division of Persia, and by way of Russia for the other quarters of it. The modern route by Constantinople is not more than fifteen years old. After our treaty of 1820, Turkey began its system of imposts upon internal commerce. He thinks that Mehemet Ali gave the impulse to Mahmoud in many of his reforms. The change is only in the dress and whitewashing of the houses, nothing fundamental being altered. After the destruction of the Janissaries, it seems that he has been quite at sea. Ruined, worn-out country."

Feb. 11th.—"Mr. Hanson thinks that matters are worse since the time of the Janissaries, who were the opposition and check of the government. Then the people were only plundered and oppressed by the Sultan and his Grand

Vizier, but now every one of the pachas about the person of the Sultan can, by obtaining firmans, oppress the poor agriculturalist. Mr. Perkins thinks the trade for Turkey does not, in Constantinople, exceed 400,000*l.*; he was told that Persia took in one year 1,200,000*l.* The trade to Persia is new for the last few years by this route; he thinks it both a creation and a transition; some of it is merely removed from Bombay. A ship or two in the year comes from Trieste, bringing goods from the German fairs to the Black Sea. In the evening I dined with Mr. Cartwright, and met a party of merchants. After dinner we discussed the trading prospects of Turkey. All agreed that the money amount of the consumption of British goods is diminishing, and that the trade to Persia forms two-thirds of the imports into Constantinople. Mr. Cartwright spoke of a person who, in Turkey, told him he had bought cloth for his coat which cost him only half as much as he would have paid for it in England. The company are obliged by their charter to take so much woollen cloth, which they sold at a loss. Russia, Mr. Cartwright thinks, will again let the trade go through Georgia, by which route it formerly reached Persia; he says that, after exhausting the fortunes of the Armenians and others, he, the Sultan, has since been preying upon agriculture. The Exchange operations of the government are merely depreciating his currency, and robbing the people by purchasing the non-interference of the foreign merchant. Russia is continually increasing the number of her subjects by naturalization. The rayahs, who form the most industrious and best, besides the most numerous part of the community, would certainly benefit by a Christian government. Mr. Cartwright and all present agreed that the Turks have not themselves the power of regeneration, and that, unless foreign aid prevent it, they must fall to pieces in less than twenty years. But absolute

occupation and authority must be possessed by the power that would regenerate Turkey. Every public servant, from the highest to the lowest, must be dismissed, as they are all corrupt. A Turk, the moment he enters the public service, is necessarily a rascal. *England must, if she interposes at all, take the part of a principal, not an auxiliary.*"

From Smyrna, after a fortnight's cruise among the islands, Cobden arrived at Athens, March 19th, where the political and economic circumstances of the new Hellenic kingdom interested him more keenly than the renowned monuments, though he did not fail in attention to them also. His inquiries filled him, as is usually the case with travellers, with admiration for the gifts of the Greek people, and confidence in their future. The perverse diplomacy which settled the limits and constitution of the kingdom, he viewed with a contempt which the course of Eastern events in the forty years since his visit has fully justified. His hopes for the future of the Greeks were not coloured by the conventional acceptance of the glories of their past. He was amazed to find the mighty states of Attica and Sparta within an area something smaller than the two counties of Yorkshire and Lancashire. "What famous puffers those old Greeks were! Half the educated world in Europe is now devoting more thought to the ancient affairs of these Lilliputian states, the squabbles of their tribes, the wars of their villages, the geography of their rivulets and hillocks, than they bestow upon the modern history of the South and North Americas, the politics of the United States, and the charts of the mighty rivers and mountains of the new world."[1]

"The antiquities of Athens may be cursorily viewed in half a day. I was not so highly impressed with the merits of these masterpieces from reading and plates, as I found myself

[1] *To F. Cobden*, from Smyrna, March 3rd, 1837.

to be on looking at the actual remains of those monuments 1837.
and temples, whose ruins crown the rocky platform of the ÆT. 33.
Acropolis. I am satisfied that there is nothing now in existence which for beauty of design, masterly workmanship, and choice of situation, can compare with that spectacle of grandeur and sublimity which the public temples of ancient Athens presented two thousand years ago. What a genius and what a taste had those people! *And, mind, the genius is there still.* All the best deeds of ancient times will be again rivalled by the Greeks of a future age. Do not believe the lying and slandering accounts which the dulness of some travellers, the envy of Levant merchants, and the Franks of Constantinople, utter against the Greek character. The raw material of all that is noble, brilliant, refined, and glorious, is still latent in the character of this people: overlaid, as is natural, with the cunning, falsehood, meanness, and other vices inherent in the spirits of slaves.

"Do not, however, fancy that I am predicting the revival of Greek greatness, through the means of the present little trumpery monarchy of that name, which will pass away like other bubbles blown by our shallow statesmen. All the East will be Greek, and Constantinople, no matter under what nominal sovereignty it may fall, will by the force of the indomitable genius of the Greeks become in fact the capital of that people." [a]

Athens, March 22.—"In the evening at Sir E. Lyons' I met Captain Fisher, who spoke of the haste with which he was ordered to sea for the Levant. He left his own son behind him, whom I met in Egypt, going to India, and for whom he had not dared to wait twenty-four hours. He also left behind two [illegible]s. He remarked that if the lives and fortunes of a nation were at stake, he could not have used more pressing expedition—yet all for no purpose that can be

[a] *To F. Cobden*, April 18, 1837.

1837. discovered! The *Portland* is carrying home Count Armans-
ÆT. 33. perg, the dismissed Minister of Greece, after bringing the King and Queen of Greece.* I saw this ship at Malta on my way out to Egypt in November. She was fitted up superbly for this young lady and gentleman, and their maids of honour and attendants. She went to Venice, and was in waiting for the royal holiday folks for two months. The *Madagascar*, Capt. Lyons, brought out the Regency and the young king. The wives of the members of the Regency quarrelled even on the passage. Sometime ago the *Medea* steamer was carrying the old King of Bavaria and his son to the islands of the Archipelago and the coast of Asia Minor. We are general carriers for erratic royalty all over the world; witness, Donna Maria Miguel, old Ferdinand of Naples, the King of Portugal and their precious minions, were the choice freights of our ships of war. When will this folly have an end?"

March 24.—"At twelve o'clock at night [in the Piræus harbour] I went on board a little boat, which set sail immediately for Kalamaki [in the Isthmus of Corinth]. It was a clear, fresh, moonlight night, and a favourable breeze soon carried us from among the ships in the harbour."

March 25.—"In the morning we were halfway across the

* The new kingdom was entrusted to a Regency until the completion of King Otho's twentieth year (June 1, 1835). Count Armansperg was President, and Von Maurer was his principal colleague. The pair showed that Germans are capable of rivalling the Greeks themselves in hatred and intrigue. "Count Armansperg, as a noble, looked down on Maurer as a pedant and law professor. Maurer sneered at the count as an idler, fit only to be a diplomatist or a master of the ceremonies" (*Finlay*, vii. 12). When King Otho returned to his kingdom in the *Portland* (Feb., 1837), he brought with him his young bride, Queen Amelia, and Rudhart to be his prime minister. Armansperg was recalled to Bavaria, after disastrous failure in his administration. Cobden might have found an excellent text for a sermon, in the childish perversity which marked Lord Palmerston's dealings with Greece in these years, from his stubborn defence of Count Armansperg down to his disputes about court etiquette, and his employment of the fleet to enforce the payment of a trifling debt.

gulf [the Saronic Gulf] by nine o'clock. . . . At eight o'clock in the evening we arrived at Kalamaki. On the beach were two persons fishing with a blazing torch and spear. We entered the khan. A few phials were on a little bar, behind which sat the master. At the other ends of the room were raised platforms of two stages, reaching to the ceiling, or rather roof (for there was no interior covering), on which the travellers had spread mats, and on some of which their snoring occupants were reposing for the night, whilst others were sitting smoking their pipes. An officer in the new uniform, and another in the Albanian dress, were sitting at a little table taking their supper with their fingers from the same dish. A little wood fire was blazing at one side of the room, upon which was some hot water, and by the side hung coffee-pots of every size, from the bigness of a thimble upwards. A large mortar of marble stood by the side of the fire, into which the coffee-grains were thrown by the servant, and pounded with a pestle, previous to being boiled for his customers. This custom of pounding instead of grinding the coffee, is I believe, universal in the East.

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"We found a proprietor of a boat from the other side of the isthmus, and engaged with him to take us to Patras for twelve dollars. We hired horses and set off across the isthmus, a distance of about six miles to Loutraki. The night was clear and cool, and the moon at nearly its full; the scenery of the mountainous and rugged neck of land which we traversed, and of the gulfs on each side, was romantic. At Loutraki we saw the caves and hollows in the sides of the mountains, into which the women and children were thrust for concealment during the war.

"We got on board at midnight, and set sail down the gulf of Corinth or Lepanto for Patras. Parnassus on our right, covered with snow—a cold bed for the muses! On each side the hills are crowned with snow. At night the

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wind was foul and contrary, and our boat took shelter in a port on the Roumeliot side of the gulf, and, on the morning of the 27th of March, finding that there was no chance of getting forward, I turned to the opposite coast, and ran for a little village, where I determined to hire horses, and push forward for Patras by land. We came to anchor near a shop, where the proprietor sold every variety of petty merchandise, such as wine, paper, candles, nails, &c., and we took some coffee, whilst a person went in search of horses. The owner of the cattle arrived soon afterwards, to make a bargain of a dollar each horse for Vostizza. He had left his animals concealed behind a bridge, and, as soon as we had agreed to his terms, they were produced. This cunning is the result of a long experience of Turkish violence. We set off with some companions for Vostizza, along a road bordering close upon the gulf, at the foot of lofty banks or hills that bound either side of the water. We passed some rich little valleys, finely cultivated and all planted with the little currant-trees. Stopped at a hut in the middle of the day, and ate some black bread and olives, and drank some wine and water. Again set forward and reached Vostizza, a little sea-port situated in a rich and well-cultivated valley, all planted with currants. The people appeared industriously at work. On walking out into the town of Vostizza, I found a few stone houses, apparently lately erected, and of public utility. Saw a concourse of people around one of these, in which there was to be an auction of public lands.

"In the khan or lodgings where I put up, there was nothing to be had to eat but eggs and caviare. I went to bed early, intending to be called at three o'clock, but could not sleep from the noise of Greeks, who were laughing and dancing in the next room. When I had by dint of threats and vociferations quieted these fellows, I was beset by such multitudes of fleas that I could not obtain a moment's

repose. I therefore arose at two o'clock, and, as the horses 1837.
soon afterwards appeared, we set off for Patras. The moon ÆT. 33.
was bright and the air cool, and we proceeded along a path close to the gulf; passed some shepherds' huts in which the lights were burning, and the dogs gave note of watchfulness. As daylight appeared, I looked anxiously to the coast for the spectacle of a sunrise behind the mountains of Roumelia. The first rays lighted up the summits of Parnassus and the other lofty mountains, whose snowy peaks were tinged with rosy hues. By degrees the sky assumed a dark dull red aspect, above the eastern range of hills; this shade gradually grew more lurid, until little by little the horizon, from a sombre red, assumed a dazzling appearance of fiery brightness, and shortly afterwards the sun flamed above the mountainous outline over the gulf, hills, and valleys around us. The path all the way lay through a thicket of shrubs of a thousand kinds, some evergreen, others aromatic, and the whole wearing the appearance of a pleasure-ground in England. The flowers, too, were fragrant, and the whole scene was full of luxuriant richness and beauty.

"We stopped at a hut at nine o'clock to breakfast, where we found a poor mud cottage, containing a few coarse articles of use for sale, as well as some bread and cheese of a very uninviting quality. I saw Lepanto on the opposite side of the gulf, and soon afterwards the Castles of Patras and Roumelia, which guard the entrance of the Gulf of Lepanto. At half-past twelve o'clock we entered Patras and went straightway to the Consul's house, to learn the time when the steamer would sail. I washed, dressed, and dined, and immediately afterwards went on board the *Hermes* steamer, Captain Blount, which arrived from Corfu. We set sail at four o'clock. In the evening, at ten, we called off Zante for letters, and then proceeded with favourable breezes for Malta."

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At Malta Cobden formed some very decided opinions as to the policy of naval administration, as illustrated at that station.

"The Malta station is the hot-bed for naval patronage, and the increase of our ships of war. They are sent to the Mediterranean for five years, the large ships are for six or eight months of each year anchored in Malta harbour, or else in Vourla or Tenedos. In the summer, for the space of four or five months, they make excursions round Sicily, or in the Archipelago as far as Smyrna or Athens, and then they return again to their anchorage to spend the winter in inactivity; the officers visiting in the city, or perhaps enjoying a long leave of absence, whilst the men, to the number of six, seven, or eight hundred, are put to such exercise or employment as the ingenuity of the first lieutenant can devise on board ship, or else are suffered to wander on shore upon occasional leaves of absence. This is not the way either to make good sailors, or to add to the power of the British empire. The expenses are borne by the industry of the productive classes at home. The wages of these idlers are paid out of the taxes levied upon the soap, beer, tobacco, &c., consumed by the people of England. But what a prospect of future expense does this state of things hold out to the nation. Every large ship contains at least forty or fifty quarter-deck officers, each one of whom, from the junior supernumerary midshipman up to the first lieutenant, has entered the service, hoping and relying that he will in due course of time, either by means of personal merit or aided by the influence of powerful friends, attain to the command of a ship of war, and all these will press their claims upon the Admiralty for future employment, and will be entitled to hope as they grow older, that their emoluments, rank, and prospects will improve every year with their increased necessities. What then is the prospect which such a state of things holds

out to the two parties concerned, the nation on the one hand, and its servants, its meritorious servants, on the other? Unwise to encourage this increase of the navy, parents might find a much better field in unsettled regions abroad."[1]

Leaving Malta on April 4, and touching at Gibraltar, he there in the course of his indefatigable questioning found new confirmation of his opinions from competent and disinterested informants.

April 15, 1837.—" In conversation Waghorn said that the admirals are all too old, and that this accounts for the service being less efficient now than heretofore; that the ships are put up for six months in the winter months at Malta, during which there is of course no exercise in seamanship for the men. Mr. Andrews told me that there are sometimes twenty ships of war lying at one time in Malta. The mode of promotion is as bad or worse now than under the Tories; there are captains now in the command of ships who five years ago had not passed as midshipmen, and there are hundreds of mates pining for lieutenancies, who have passed ten years. The Treasury presses upon the Admiralty for the promotion of friends and dependants of the ministers of the day, and thus leaves no room for the exercise of justice towards the old and deserving officers. This was more excusable at the time of the rotten boroughs than now, when no such interest can be necessary. There are thirty or forty midshipmen in one of the first-raters; how much incipient disappointment, poverty, and neglect! The Admiral states that it is enough to depress his spirits to see so many young men, some of them twenty-five, and capable of commanding the best ships, filling the situation of boys only. Young Baily in conversation spoke of the way in which the *Portland* was fitted up for the Queen of Greece and her maids of honour, twenty guns removed and the space converted into

[1] *Journal*, March 31, 1837.

1837. elegant rooms draped and furnished for the king, queen, and suite. The queen, on arriving at Athens, was so pleased with her lodging on board, that she sent an artist to take a drawing of her rooms. The vessel waited a couple of months at Trieste and Venice, for the royal pair. After bringing them and their ministers, the *Portland* carried back Count Armansperg to Malta."[2]

On the 21st of April Cobden arrived at Falmouth, after an absence of six months. I must repeat here what I said at the beginning of these extracts, that the portions of his letters and journals which record the most energetic of his interests and his inquiries, are precisely those which are no longer worth reproducing, because the facts of commerce and of politics, which formed the most serious object of his investigation, have undergone such a change as to be hardly more to our purpose than the year's almanack. When we come to the journals of ten years later, the reader will be able to judge the spirit and method with which Cobden travelled, and perhaps to learn a lesson from him in the objects of travel. Meanwhile, Cobden could hardly have spent a more profitable holiday, for he had laid up a great stock of political information, and acquired a certain living familiarity with the circumstances of the eastern basin of the Mediterranean and the Turkish Government—then as now the centre of our active diplomacy—and with the real working of those principles of national policy which he had already condemned by the light of native common sense and reflection.

[2] *Journal*, April 15.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TWO PAMPHLETS.

It is not at the first glance very easy to associate a large 1835-6.
and theorizing doctrine of human civilization with the name Æt. 31-2.
of one who was at this time a busy dealer in printed calicoes, and who almost immediately afterwards became the most active of political agitators. There may seem to be a certain incongruity in discussing a couple of pamphlets by a Manchester manufacturer, as if they were the speculations of an abstract philosopher. Yet it is no strained pretension to say that at this time Cobden was fully possessed by the philosophic gift of feeling about society as a whole, and thinking about the problems of society in an ordered connexion with one another. He had definite and systematic ideas of the way in which men ought now to travel in search of improvement; and he attached new meaning and more comprehensive purpose to national life.

The agitations of the great Reform Act of 1832 had stirred up social aspirations, which the Liberal Government of the next ten years after the passing of the Act were utterly unable to satisfy. This inability arose partly from their own political ineptitude and want alike of conviction and courage; and partly from the fact that many of these aspirations lay wholly outside of the sphere of any government. To give a vote to all ten-pound householders, and to abolish a few rotten boroughs, was seen to carry the nation

1835-6. Æt. 31-2. a very little way on the journey for which it had girded itself up. The party which had carried the change seemed to have sunk to the rank of a distracted faction, blind to the demands of the new time, with no strong and common doctrine, with no national aims, and hardly even with any vigorous personal ambitions. People suddenly felt that the interesting thing was not mechanism but policy, and unfortunately the men who had amended the mechanism were in policy found empty and without resource. The result of the disappointment was such a degree of fresh and independent activity among all the better minds of the time, that the succeeding generation, say from 1840 to 1870, practically lived upon the thought and sentiment of the seven or eight years immediately preceding the close of the Liberal reign in 1841. It was during those years that the schools were formed and the principles shaped, which have attracted to themselves all who were serious enough to feel the need of a school or the use of a principle.

If the change in institutions which had taken place in 1832 had brought forth hardly any of the fruit, either bitter or sweet, which friends had hoped and enemies had threatened, it was no wonder that those who were capable of a large earnestness about public things, whether civil or ecclesiastical, turned henceforth from the letter of institutions to their spirit; from their form and outer framework to the operative force within; and from stereotyped catchwords about the social union to its real destination. It was now the day of ideals in every camp. The general restlessness was as intense among reflecting Conservatives as among reflecting Liberals; and those who looked to the past agreed with those who looked to the future, in energetic dissatisfaction with a sterile present. We need only look around to recognize the unity of the original impulse which animated men who dreaded or hated one another; and

inspired books that were as far apart as a humoristic novel and a treatise on the Sacraments. A great wave of humanity, of benevolence, of desire for improvement—a great wave of social sentiment, in short,—poured itself among all who had the faculty of large and disinterested thinking. The political spirit was abroad in its most comprehensive sense, the desire of strengthening society by adapting it to better intellectual ideals, and enriching it from new resources of moral power. A feeling for social regeneration, under what its apostles conceived to be a purer spiritual guidance, penetrated ecclesiastical common-rooms no less than it penetrated the manufacturing districts. It was in 1835 that Dr. Pusey threw himself with new heartiness into the movement at Oxford, that Dr. Newman projected Catenas of Anglican divines, and began to meditate Tract Ninety. In the opposite quarter of the horizon Mr. Mill was still endeavouring, in the *Westminster Review*, to put a new life into Radical politics by giving a more free and genial character to Radical speculations, and—a far more important task—was composing the treatise which gave a decisive tone to English ways of thinking for thirty years afterwards. Men like Arnold and like Maurice were almost intoxicated with their passion for making citizenship into something loftier and more generous than the old strife of Blues and Yellows: unfortunately they were so beset with prejudices against what they confusedly denounced as materialism and utilitarianism, that they turned aside from the open ways of common sense and truth to fact, to nourish themselves on vague dreams of a church which, though it rested on the great mysteries of the faith, yet for purposes of action could only after all become an instrument for the secular teaching of Adam Smith and Bentham. To the fermentation of those years Carlyle contributed the vehement apostrophes of *Chartism* and *Past and Present*, glowing

1835-6.
Ær. 31-2.

1835-6. with eloquent contempt for the aristocratic philosophy of
Æt. 31-2. treadmills, gibbets, and thirty-nine Acts of Parliament "for the shooting of partridges alone," but showing no more definite way for national redemption than lay through the too vague words of Education and Emigration. Finally, in the same decade, the early novels of Charles Dickens brought into vivid prominence among the objects of popular interest such types of social outlawry as the parish apprentice, the debtor in prison, the pauper in the workhouse, the criminal by profession, and all the rest of that pitiful gallery. Dickens had hardly any solution beyond a mere Christmas philanthropy, but he stirred the sense of humanity in his readers, and from great imaginative writers we have no right to insist upon more.

Notwithstanding their wide diversity of language and of method, still to all of these rival schools and men of genius the ultimate problem was the same. With all of them the aim to be attained was social renovation. Even the mystics of Anglo-Catholicism, as I have said, had in the inmost recesses of their minds a clear belief that the revival of sacramental doctrine and the assertion of apostolic succession would quicken the moral life of the nation, and meet social needs no less than it would meet spiritual needs. Far apart as Cobden stood from these and all the other sections of opinion that I have named, yet his early pamphlets show that he discerned as keenly as any of them that the hour had come for developing new elements in public life, and setting up a new standard of public action. To Cobden, as to Arnold or to Mill, the real meaning of his activity was, in a more or less formal and conscious way, the hope of supplying a systematic foundation for higher social order, and the wider diffusion of a better kind of well-being.

He had none of the pedantry of the doctrinaire, but he

was full of the intellectual spirit. Though he was shortly to become the leader of a commercial movement, he never ceased to be the preacher of a philosophy of civilization; and his views on trade were only another side of views on education and morality. Realist as he was, yet his opinions were inspired and enriched by the genius of social imagination. 1835-6. Æt. 31-2.

Some readers will smile when I say that no teacher of that day was found so acceptable or so inspiring by Cobden as George Combe. He had read Combe's volume before he wrote his pamphlets, and he said that "it seemed like a transcript of his own familiar thoughts."[1] Few emphatically second-rate men have done better work than the author of the *Constitution of Man*. That memorable book, whose principles have now in some shape or other become the accepted commonplaces of all rational persons, was a startling revelation when it was first published (1828), showing men that their bodily systems are related to the rest of the universe, and are subject to general and inexorable conditions; that health of mind and character are connected with states of body; that the old ignorant or ascetical disregard of the body is hostile both to happiness and mental power; and that health is a true department of morality. We cannot wonder that zealous men were found to bequeath fortunes for the dissemination of that wholesome gospel, that it was circulated by scores of thousands of copies, and that it was seen on shelves where there was nothing else save the Bible and Pilgrim's Progress.

It is easy to discern the attraction which teaching so fresh and inspiriting as this, would have for a mind like Cobden's, constitutionally eager to break from the old grooves of things, alert for every sign of new light and hope in the sombre sky of prejudice, and confident in the large possibility of human destiny. To show, as Combe

[1] *Life of George Combe*, ii. 11.

1835-6. showed, that the character and motives of men are con-
ÆT. 31-2. nected with physical predispositions, was to bring character and motive within the sphere of action, because we may in that case modify them by attending to the requirements of the bodily organization. A boundless field is thus opened for the influence of social institutions, and the opportunities of beneficence are without limit. There is another side on which Cobden found Combe's teaching in harmony with the impulses of his own temperament: it rests upon the natural soundness of the human heart, and its methods are those of mildness and lenity. In his intrepid faith in the perfectibility of man and society, Cobden is the only eminent practical statesman that this country has ever possessed, who constantly breathes the fine spirit of that French school in which the name of Turgot is the most illustrious.

The doctrine of the pamphlets has its avowed source in the very same spirit which has gradually banished violence, harshness, and the darker shapes of repression from the education of the young, from the treatment of the insane, from the punishment of criminals, and has substituted for those time-honoured but most ineffective processes, a rational moderation and enlightened humanity, the force of lenient and considerate example and calm self-possession. Non-intervention was an extension of the principle which, renouncing appeals through brute violence, rests on the nobler and more powerful qualities of the understanding and the moral nature. Cobden's distinction as a statesman was not that he accepted and applied this principle in a general way. Charlatans and marauders accept such principles in that way. His merit is that he discerned that England, at any rate, whatever might be true of Germany, France, or Russia, was in the position where the present adoption of this new spirit of policy would exactly coincide with all her best and largest

interests. Now and at all times Cobden was far too shrewd and practical in his temper to suppose that unfamiliar truths will shine into the mind of a nation by their own light. It was of England that he thought, and for England that he wrote; and what he did was not to declaim the platitudes of rose-coloured morality, but by reference to the hardest facts of our national existence and international relations, to show that not only the moral dignity, but the material strength, the solid interests, the real power of the country, alike for improvements within and self-defence without, demanded the abandonment of the diplomatic principles of a time which was as unenlightened and mischievous on many sides of its foreign policy, as everybody knows and admits it to have been in the schoolroom, in the hospital, and in the offices of the national revenue. 1835-6. ÆT. 31-2.

The pamphlets do not deal with the universe, but with this country. Their writer has been labelled a cosmopolitan,—usually by those who in the same breath, by a violent contradiction, reproached him for preaching a gospel of national selfishness and isolation. In truth Cobden was only cosmopolitan in the sense in which no other statesman would choose to deny himself to be cosmopolitan also; namely, in the sense of aiming at a policy which, in benefiting his own country, should benefit all the rest of the world at the same time. "I am an English citizen," he would have said, "and what I am contending for is that England is to-day so situated in every particular of her domestic and foreign circumstances, that by leaving other governments to settle their own business and fight out their own quarrels, and by attending to the vast and difficult affairs of her own enormous realm and the condition of her people, she will not only be setting the world an example of noble morality which no other nation is so happily free to set, but she will be following the very course which the maintenance

1835-6. of her own greatness most imperatively commands. It is
ÆT. 31-2. precisely because Great Britain is so strong in resources, in courage, in institutions, in geographical position, that she can, before all other European powers, afford to be moral, and to set the example of a mighty nation walking in the paths of justice and peace."

Cobden's political genius perceived this great mark of the time, that, in his own words, "at certain periods in the history of a nation, it becomes necessary to review its principles of domestic policy, for the purpose of adapting the government to the changing and improving condition of its people." Next, "it must be equally the part of a wise community to alter the maxims by which its foreign relations have in times past been regulated, in conformity with the changes that have taken place over the entire globe."[1] Such a period he conceived to have come for England in that generation, and it had come to her both from her internal conditions, and from the nature of her connexions with the other nations of the globe. The thought was brought to him not by deliberate philosophizing, but by observation and the process of native good sense, offering a fresh and open access to things. The cardinal fact that struck his eye was the great population that was gathering in the new centres of industry in the north of England, in the factories, and mines, and furnaces, and cyclopean foundries, which the magic of steam had called into such sudden and marvellous being.

It was with no enthusiasm that he reflected on this transformation that had overtaken the western world, and in his first pamphlet he anticipated the cry, of which he heard more than enough all through his life, that his dream was to convert England into a vast manufactory, and that his political vision was directed by the interests of his order.

[1] Advertisement to *Russia* (1836).

"Far from nourishing any such *esprit-de-corps*," he says in the first pamphlet, "our predilections lean altogether in an opposite direction. We were born and bred up amid the pastoral charms of the south of England, and we confess to so much attachment for the pursuits of our forefathers, that, had we the casting of the parts of all the actors in this world's stage, we do not think we should suffer a cotton-mill or a manufactory to have a place in it. . . . But the factory system, which sprang from the discoveries in machinery, has been adopted by all the civilized nations in the world, and it is in vain for us to think of discountenancing its application to the necessities of this country; it only remains for us to mitigate, as far as possible, the evils that are perhaps not inseparably connected with this novel social element." 1835-6. ÆT. 31-2.

To this conception of the new problem Cobden always kept very close. This was always to him the foundation of the new order of things, which demanded a new kind of statesmanship and new ideas upon national policy. It is true that Cobden sometimes slips into the phrases of an older school, about the rights of man and natural law, but such lapses into the dialect of a revolutionary philosophy were very rare, and they were accidents. His whole scheme rested, if ever any scheme did so rest, upon the wide positive base of a great social expediency. To political exclusion, to commercial monopoly and restriction, to the preponderance of a territorial aristocracy in the legislature, he steadfastly opposed the contention that they were all fatally incompatible with an industrial system, which it was beyond the power of any statesman or any order in the country to choose between accepting and casting out.

Fifty years before this, the younger Pitt, when he said that any man with twenty thousand pounds a year ought to be made a peer if he wished, had recognized the neces-

1835-6. sity of admitting bankers and merchants to a share of the
ÆT. 31-2. political dignity which had hitherto been confined to the great families. It had now ceased to be a question of a few peerages more or less for Lombard Street or Cornhill. Commercial interests no less than territorial interests were now overshadowed by industrial interests; the new difficulties, the new problems, the new perils, all sprang from what had taken place since William Pitt's time, the portentous expansion of our industrial system. Between the date of Waterloo and the date of the Reform Act, the power-looms in Manchester had increased from two thousand to eighty thousand, and the population of Birmingham had grown from ninety to one hundred and fifty thousand. The same wonders had come to pass in enormous districts over the land.

Cobden was naturally led to begin his survey of society, as such a survey is always begun by the only kind of historian that is worth reading. He looked to wealth and its distribution, to material well-being, to economic resources, to their administration, to the varying direction and relative force of their currents. It was here that he found the key to the stability and happiness of a nation, in the sense in which stability and happiness are the objects of its statesmen. He declined to make any excuse for so frequently resolving questions of state policy into matters of pecuniary calculation, and he delighted in such business-like statements as that the cost of the Mediterranean squadron in proportion to the amount of the trade which it was professedly employed to protect, was as though a merchant should find that his traveller's expenses for escort alone were to amount to 6*s*. 8*d*. in the pound on his sales. He pointed to the examples in history, where some of the greatest and most revolutionary changes in the modern world had a fiscal or economic origin. And if Cobden had

on his visit to Athens seen Finlay, he might have learnt from that admirable historian the same lesson on a still more imposing scale in the ancient world. He would have been told that even so momentous an event in the annals of human civilization as the disappearance of rural slavery in Europe, was less due to moral or political causes than to such a decline in the value of the products of slave-labour as left no profit to the slave-owner. From the fall of the Roman Empire to the mortal decay of Spain, and the ruin of the ancient monarchy of France, history shows that Cobden was amply justified in laying down the principle that the affairs of a nation come under the same laws of common sense and homely wisdom which govern the prosperity of a private concern.

In material well-being he maintained, and rightly maintained, that you not only have the surest foundation for a solid fabric of morality and enlightenment among your people, but in the case of one of our vast and populous modern societies of free men, the only sure bulwark against ceaseless disorder and violent convulsion. It was not, therefore, from the side of emotional sympathy that Cobden started, but from that positive and scientific feeling for good order and right government which is the statesman's true motive and deepest passion. The sentimental benevolence to which Victor Hugo and Dickens have appealed with such power, could give little help in dealing with the surging uncontrollable tides of industrial and economic forces. Charity, it is true, had been an accepted auxiliary in the thinly peopled societies of the middle ages; but for the great populations and complex interests of the western world in modern times, it is seen that prosperity must depend on policy and institutions, and not on the compassion of individuals.

It is not necessary that we should analyse the contents

1835-6. of pamphlets which any one may read through for himself
ÆT. 31-2. in a few hours, and which well deserve to be read through even by those who expect their conclusions to be most repugnant. The pamphlet on *England, Ireland, and America* is a development of the following thought:—A nation is growing up on the other side of the Atlantic which by the operation of various causes, duly enumerated by the writer, must inevitably at no distant date enter into serious competition with our own manufactures. Apart from the natural advantages possessed by this new competitor, there are two momentous disadvantages imposed upon the English manufacturer, which tend to disable him in the struggle with his formidable rival. These two disadvantages are first, protection and the restriction of commerce; second, the policy of intervention in European feuds. The one loads us with a heavy burden of taxation and debt; the other aggravates the burden by limiting our use of our own resources. The place of Ireland in the argument, after a vivid and too true picture of the deplorable condition of that country, is to illustrate from the most striking example within the writer's own knowledge, "the impolicy and injustice of the statesmen who have averted their faces from this diseased member of the body politic; and at the same time have led us, thus maimed, into the midst of every conflict that has occurred on the continent of Europe." In fine, the policy of intervention ought to be abandoned, because it has created and continues to augment the debt, which shackles us in our industrial competition; because it has in every case been either mischievous or futile, and constantly so even in reference to its own professed ends; and because it has absorbed energy and resource that were imperiously demanded by every consideration of national duty for the improvement of the backward and neglected portions of our own realms.

In the second pamphlet the same principles are applied to the special case which the prejudice of the time made urgent. David Urquhart, a remarkable man, of prodigious activity, and with a singular genius for impressing his opinions upon all sorts of men from aristocratic dandies down to the grinders of Sheffield and the cobblers of Stafford, had recently published an appeal to England in favour of Turkey. He had furnished the ministers with arguments for a policy to which they leaned by the instinct of old prejudice, and he had secured all the editors of the newspapers. Mr. Urquhart's book was the immediate provocation for Cobden's pamphlets. In the second of them the author dealt with Russia. With Russia we were then, as twenty years later and forty years later, and, as perhaps some reader of the next generation may write on the margin of this page, possibly sixty years later, urged with passionate imprecations to go to war in defence of European law, the balance of power, and the security of British interests. 1835-6. Æt. 31-2.

Disclaiming a spirit of partiality for any principle of the foreign or the domestic policy of the Government of St. Petersburg, Cobden proceeded to examine each of the arguments by which it was then, as now, the fashion to defend an armed interference by England between Russia and Turkey. A free and pointed description, first of Turkey, and next of Russia, and a contrast between the creation of St. Petersburg and the decline of Constantinople, lead up to the propositions:—first, that the advance of Russia to the countries which the Turk once wasted by fire and sword, and still wastes by the more deadly processes of misgovernment, would be a great step in the progress of improvement; second, that no step in the progress of improvement and the advance of civilization can be inimical to the interests or the welfare of Great Britain. What advantage can it be to us, a commercial and manufacturing people, that

1835-6. countries placed in the healthiest latitudes and blessed with
Æt. 31-2. the finest climate in the world, should be retained in a condition which hinders their inhabitants from increasing and multiplying; from extracting a wealth from the soil which would enable them to purchase the products of western lands; and so from changing their present poverty-stricken and plague-stricken squalor, for the manifold enjoyment of their share of all the products of natural resource and human ingenuity. As for Russia, her treatment of Poland was cruel and unjust, but let us at least put aside the cant of the sentimental declaimers who, amid a cloud of phrases about ancient freedom, national independence, and glorious republic, obscure the fact that the Polish nation meant only a body of nobles. About nineteen out of every twenty of the inhabitants were serfs without a single civil or political right; one in twenty was a noble; and the Polish nobles were the vainest, most selfish, most cruelly intolerant, most violently lawless aristocracy of ancient or modern times. Let us join by all means in the verdict of murder, robbery, treason, and perjury which every free and honest nation must declare against Russia, Prussia, and Austria for their undissembled wickedness in the partition. Let us go further, and admit that the infamy with which Burke, Sheridan, and Fox laboured to overwhelm the emissaries of British violence in India, was justly earned at the very same period by the minions of Russian despotism in Poland. But no honest man who takes the trouble to compare the condition of the true people of Poland under Russia, with their condition under their own tyrannical nobles a century ago—and here Cobden gives ample means of comparison—will deny that in material prosperity and in moral order of life the advance has been at least as great as in any other portion of the habitable globe. Apart from these historic changes, the Russo-maniac ideas of Russian power

are demonstrably absurd. With certain slight modifications, Cobden's demonstration of their absurdity remains as valid now as it was forty years ago. 1835-6. ÆT. 31-2.

The keen and vigorous arguments by which Cobden attacked the figment of the balance of power are now tacitly accepted by politicians of all schools. Even the most eager partisans of English intervention in the affairs of other nations now feel themselves bound to show as plausibly as they can, that intervention is demanded by some peril to the interests of our own country. It is in vain that authors of another school struggle against Cobden's position, that the balance of power is not a fallacy nor an imposture, but a chimera, a something incomprehensible, undescribed, and indescribable. The attempted definitions of it fall to pieces at the touch of historic analysis. If we find the smaller states still preserving an independent existence, it is owing, Cobden said, not to the watchful guardianship of the balancing system, but to limits set by the nature of things to unduly extended dominion; not only to physical boundaries, but to the more formidable moral impediments to the invader,—"unity of language, law, custom and traditions; the instinct of patriotism and freedom; the hereditary rights of rulers; and, though last, not least, that homage to the restraints of justice, which nations and public bodies have in all ages avowed, however they may have found excuses for evading it."

That brilliant writer, the historian of the Crimean War, has described in a well-known passage what he calls the great Usage which forms the safeguard of Europe. This great Usage is the accepted obligation of each of the six Powers to protect the weak against the strong. But in the same page a limitation is added, which takes the very pith and marrow out of this moral and chivalrous Usage, and reduces it to the very commonplace principle that nations are bound

1835-6. to take care of themselves. For, says the writer, no Power
ÆT. 31-2. is practically under this obligation, unless its perception of the wrong that has been done is reinforced by a sense of its own interests.[3] Then it is the self-interest of each nation which is the decisive element in every case of intervention, and not a general doctrine about the balance of power, or an alleged common usage of protecting the weak against the strong? But that is exactly what Cobden started from. His premise was that "no government has the right to plunge its people into hostilities, except in defence of their own honour and interests." There would seem then to be no difference of principle between the military and the commercial schools of foreign policy. The trader from Manchester and the soldier from Aldershot or Woolwich, without touching the insoluble, because only half intelligible, problem of the balance of power, may agree to discuss the propriety of a given war on the solid ground of national self-interest. Each will be affected by professional bias, so that one of them will be apt to believe that our self-interest is touched at a point which the other will consider too remote to concern us; but neither can claim any advantage over the other as the disinterested champion of public law and the rights of Europe. If there is a difference deeper than this, it must be that the soldier or the diplomatist of the old school has really in his mind a set of opinions as to the ends for which a nation exists, and as to the relations of class-interests to one another, of such a colour that no serious politician in modern times would venture openly to avow them.

If the two theories of the duty of a nation in regard to war are examined in this way, we see how unreasonable it is that Cobden's theory of non-intervention should be called selfish by those who would be ashamed to base an opposite

[3] Kinglake, vol. i. ch. ii.

policy on anything else than selfishness. "Our desire," Cobden said, "is to see Poland happy, Turkey civilized, and Russia conscientious and free: it is still more our wish that these ameliorations should be bestowed by the hands of Britain upon her less instructed neighbours: so far the great majority of our opponents and ourselves are agreed. *How* to accomplish this beneficent purpose, is the question whereon we differ." They would resort, as Washington Irving said in a pleasant satire on us, to the cudgel, to promote the good of their neighbours and the peace and happiness of the world. There is one unanswerable objection to this, Cobden answered: experience is against it; it has been tried for hundreds of years, and has failed. He proposed to arrive at the same end by means of our national example, by remaining at peace, vigorously pursuing reforms and improvements, and so presenting that spectacle of wealth, prosperity, power, and invincible stability, which reward an era of peace wisely and diligently used. Your method, he said, cannot be right, because it assumes that you are at all times able to judge what will be good for others and the world—which you are not. And even if your judgment were infallible, the method would be equally wrong, for you have no jurisdiction over other states which authorizes you to do them good by force of arms.

The source of these arguments lay in three convictions. First, the government of England must always have its hands full, in attending to its domestic business. Second, it can seldom be sure which party is in the right in a foreign quarrel, and very seldom indeed be sure that the constituencies, ignorant and excitable as they are, will discern the true answer to that perplexing question. Finally, the government which keeps most close to morality in its political dealings, will find itself in the long-run to have kept most close to the nature of things, and to that success which rewards conformity to the

1835-6. nature of things. It followed from such reasoning as this
ÆT. 31-2. that the author of the pamphlets denounced by anticipation the policy of compelling the Chinese by ships of war to open more ports to our vessels. Why, he asked in just scorn, should not the ships of war on their way out compel the French to transfer the trade of Marseilles to Havre, and thus save us the carriage of their wines through the Straits of Gibraltar? Where is the moral difference? And as to Gibraltar itself, he contended, that though the retention of conquered colonies may be regarded with some complacency, because they are reprisals for previous depredations by their parent states, yet England for fifty years at Gibraltar is a spectacle of brute violence, unmitigated by any such excuses. "Upon no principle of morality," he went on, "can this unique outrage upon the integrity of an ancient, powerful, and renowned nation be justified; the example, if imitated, instead of being shunned universally, would throw all the nations of the earth into barbarous anarchy." Here as everywhere else we see how wrong is the begetter of wrong, for if England had not possessed Gibraltar, she would not have been tempted to pursue that turbulent policy in the Mediterranean, which is still likely one day to cost her dear.[4]

Again, the immoral method has failed. Why not try now whether commerce will not succeed better than war, in regenerating and uniting the nations whom you would fain improve? Let governments have as little to do with one another as possible, and let people begin to have as much to do with one another as possible. Of

[4] It is perhaps not out of place to mention that several years ago, the present writer once asked Mr. Mill's opinion on the question of the possession of Gibraltar. His answer was that the really desirable thing in the case of strong places commanding the entrance to close seas is that they should be in the hands of a European League. Meanwhile, as the state of international morality is not ripe for such a League, England is perhaps of all nations least likely to abuse the possession of a strong place of that kind.

how many cases of intervention by England does every Englishman now not admit that they were monstrous and inexcusable blunders, and that if we had pursued the alternative method of doing the work of government well at home and among our dependencies, improving our people, lightening the burdens of commerce and manufactures, husbanding wealth, we should have augmented our own material power, for which great national wealth is only another word; and we should have taught to the governments that had been exhausting and impoverishing themselves in war, the great lesson that the way to give content, enlightenment, and civil virtues, to your people, and a solid strength to their government, is to give them peace. It is thus, Cobden urged, that the virtues of nations operate both by example and precept; and such is the power and rank they confer, that in the end "states will all turn moralists in self-defence."

These most admirable pages were no mere rhetoric. They represented no abstract preference, but a concrete necessity. The writer was able to point to a nation whose example of pacific industry, wise care of the education of her young, and abstinence from such infatuated intervention as ours in the affairs of others, would, as he warned us, one day turn us into moralists in self-defence, as one day it assuredly will. It is from the peaceful nation in the west, and not from the military nations of the east, that danger to our strength will come. "In that portentous truth, *The Americas are free*, teeming as it does with future change, there is nothing that more nearly affects our destiny than the total revolution which it dictates to the statesmen of Great Britain in the commercial, colonial, and foreign policy of our Government. America is once more the theatre upon which nations are contending for mastery; it is not, however, a struggle for conquest, in which the victor will

acquire territorial domain—the fight is for commercial supremacy, and will be won by the cheapest."[5] Yet in the very year in which Cobden thus predicted the competition of America, and warned the English Government to prepare for it by husbanding the wealth of the country and educating its people, the same assembly which was with the utmost difficulty persuaded to grant ten thousand pounds for the establishment of normal schools, spent actually fifty times as much in interfering in the private quarrels of two equally brutal dynastic factions in Spain. Our great case of intervention, between the rupture of the peace of Amiens and the battle of Waterloo, had left a deep and lasting excitability in the minds of Englishmen. They felt that if anything were going wrong in any part of the world, it must be owing to a default of duty in the British Government. One writer, for instance, drew up a serious indictment against the Whigs in 1834, on the ground that they had only passed a Reform Bill and a Poor Law Bill at home, while abroad the Dutch question was undecided; the

[5] "Looking to the natural endowments of the North American continent—as superior to Europe as the latter is to Africa—with an almost immeasurable extent of river navigation—its boundless expanse of the most fertile soil in the world, and its inexhaustible mines of coal, iron, lead, &c.:—looking at these, and remembering the quality and position of a people universally instructed and perfectly free, and possessing, as a consequence of these, a new-born energy and vitality very far surpassing the character of any nation of the old world—the writer reiterates the moral of his former work, by declaring his conviction that it is from the west, rather than from the east, that danger to the supremacy of Great Britain is to be apprehended;—that it is from the silent and peaceful rivalry of American commerce, the growth of its manufactures, its rapid progress in internal improvements, the superior education of its people, and their economical and pacific government—that it is from these, and not from the barbarous policy or the impoverishing armaments of Russia, that the grandeur of our commercial and national prosperity is endangered. *And the writer stakes his reputation upon the prediction, that, in less than twenty years, this will be the sentiment of the people of England generally; and that the same conviction will be forced upon the Government of the country.*" If Cobden had allowed fifty years, instead of twenty, for the fulfilment of his prediction, he would perhaps have been safe.

French were still at Ancona; Don Carlos was fighting in Spain; Don Miguel was preparing for a new conflict in Portugal; Turkey and Egypt were at daggers drawn; Switzerland was quarrelling about Italian refugees; Frankfort was occupied by Prussian troops in violation of the treaty of Vienna; Algiers was being made a French colony, in violation of French promises made in 1829; ten thousand Polish nobles were still proscribed and wandering all over Europe; French gaols were full of political offenders. This pretty list of wrongs it was taken for granted that an English ministry and English armies should make it their first business to set right. As Cobden said, if such ideas prevailed, the Whig government would leave Providence nothing to attend to. Yet this was only the *reductio ad absurdum* of that excitability about foreign affairs which the long war had left behind. The vulgar kind of patriotic sentiment leads its professors to exult in military interventions even so indescribably foolish as this. What Cobden sought was to nourish that nobler and more substantial kind of patriotism, which takes a pride in the virtue and enlightenment of our own citizens, in the wisdom and success of our institutions, in the beneficence of our dealings with less advanced possessions, and in the lofty justice and independence of our attitude to other nations.

No one claims for Cobden that he was the first statesman who had dreamed the dream and seen the vision of a great pacification. Everybody has heard of the Grand Design of Henry the Fourth of France, with its final adjustment of European alliances, and its august Senate of the Christian Republic. In the eighteenth century, so rich as it was in great humane ideas, we are not surprised to find more than one thinker and more than one statesman enamoured of the policy of peaceful industry, from the Abbé de Saint Pierre, who denounced Lewis XIV. for seeking aggrandize-

1835-6. ment abroad while destroying prosperity at home, down to
Ær. 31-2. Kant, who wrote an essay on perpetual peace; and to the French Encyclopædists, who were a standing peace party down to the outbreak of the Revolution. Apart from these utopias of a too hopeful philosophy, there is one practical statesman whom the historian of political opinion in England may justly treat as a precursor of Cobden's school. This is Lord Shelburne, the political instructor of the younger Pitt. He was the first powerful actor in our national affairs, in whom the great school of the Economists found a sincere disciple. It was to Morellet, the writer in the Encyclopædia and the friend of Turgot, rather even than to Adam Smith and Tucker, that Shelburne professed to owe those views on peace and international relations which appeared in the negotiations of his government with France after the war with the American colonies, and which, alas, after a deplorable interval of half a century, the next person to enforce as the foundation of our political system, was the author of the two Manchester pamphlets. In the speech which closed his career as a minister (1783), Shelburne had denounced monopoly as always unwise, but for no nation under heaven so unwise as for England. With more industry, he cried, with more enterprise, with more capital than any trading nation in the world, all that we ought to covet upon earth is free trade and open markets. His defence of the pacific policy as most proper for this country was as energetic as his enthusiasm for free trade, and he never displayed more vigour and conviction than when he attacked Pitt for allowing himself,—and this was before the war with the French Republic,—to be drawn again into the fatal policy of European intervention in defence of the integrity of the Turkish empire.

The reason why Shelburne's words were no more than a passing and an unheeded voice, while the teaching of

Cobden's pamphlets stamped a deep impression on men's 1835-6.
minds,—which time, in spite of inevitable phases of reaction ÆT. 31-2
and the temporary recrudescence of bad opinions, has only made more definite,—is the decisive circumstance which has already been sufficiently dwelt upon, that the huge expansion of the manufacturing interests had, when Cobden appeared, created a powerful public naturally favourable to the new principles, and raised what would otherwise have been only the tenets of a school into the programme of a national party.

As we shall see when we come to the Crimean War, the new principles did not at once crush out the old; it was not to be expected by any one who reflects on the strength of prejudice, especially prejudice supported by the consciousness of an honourable motive, that so sudden a change should take place. But the pamphlets are a great landmark in the history of politics in England, and they are still as well worth reading as they ever were. Some of the statements are antiquated; the historical criticism is sometimes open to doubt; there are one or two mistakes. But they are mostly like the poet's, who spoke of "*i miei non falsi errori.*" If time has weakened their literal force, it has confirmed their real significance.

In a personal biography, it is perhaps not out of place to dwell in conclusion on a point in the two pamphlets, which is of very secondary importance compared with their political teaching, and yet which has an interest of its own; I mean the literary excellence of these performances. They have a ringing clearness, a genial vivacity, a free and confident mastery of expression, which can hardly be surpassed. Cobden is a striking instance against a favourite plea of the fanatics of Latin and Greek. They love to insist that a collegian's scholarship is the great source and fountain

of a fine style. It would be nearer the truth to say that our classical training is more aptly calculated to destroy the qualities of good writing and fine speaking, than any other system that could have been contrived. Those qualities depend principally, in men of ordinary endowment, upon a certain large freedom and spontaneousness, and next upon a strong habit of observing things before words. These are exactly the habits of mind which our way of teaching, or rather of not teaching, Latin and Greek inevitably chills and represses in any one in whom literary faculty is not absolutely irrepressible. What is striking in Cobden is that after a lost and wasted childhood, a youth of drudgery in a warehouse, and an early manhood passed amid the rather vulgar associations of the commercial traveller, he should at the age of one and thirty have stepped forth the master of a written style, which in boldness, freedom, correctness, and persuasive moderation, was not surpassed by any man then living. He had taken pains with his mind, and had been a diligent and extensive reader, but he had never studied language for its own sake.

It was fortunate for him that, instead of blunting the spontaneous faculty of expression by minute study of the verbal peculiarities of a Lysias or an Isocrates, he should have gone to the same school of active public interests and real things in which those fine orators had in their different degrees acquired so happy a union of homeliness with purity, and of amplitude with measure. These are the very qualities that we notice in Cobden's earliest pages; they evidently sprang from the writer's singular directness of eye, and eager and disinterested sincerity of social feeling, undisturbed as both these gifts fortunately were by the vices of literary self-consciousness.

CHAPTER V.

LIFE IN MANCHESTER, 1837-9.

A FEW weeks after Cobden's return home from the East, William the Fourth died (June 20), and the accession of Queen Victoria to the throne was followed by a general election. For some months Cobden's name had been before the politicians of Stockport, and while he was abroad, he had kept his brother constantly instructed how to proceed in the various contingencies of electioneering. Frederick Cobden seems even at this early stage to have expressed some not unnatural anxiety, lest public life should withdraw the indispensable services of his brother from their business, He had even remonstrated against any further pamphlets. "Do not fear," replied Richard Cobden, "I am not author-mad. But I have written a letter to the editor of the *Globe*, in which,"—and so forth.[1] He was in no sense author-mad, but still he was overflowing with thoughts and arguments and a zeal for the commonwealth, which made publication in one shape or another as much a necessity to him, as it is a necessity to a poet or an apostle. In the same letter, in answer to a friend's warning that he should not spoil his holiday by anxiety as to affairs at home, he said:—"I am not, I assure him, giving one moment's thought to the Stockport electors. The worthy folks may do as they please. They can make me M.P. by their favour, but they cannot mar my happiness if they reject me. It is 'the

1837.
ÆT 33.

[1] *To F. Cobden.* Nov. 11, 1836.

1837. cause[1] with which I am in some degree identified, that makes
ÆT. 33. me anxious about the result. Personally, as you well know, I would rather have my freedom for two years more." . . . . "Let me say once for all, in reference to the Stockport affair, that I shall be quite happy, whichever way the die falls. You know me better than any other person, and I am sure you will believe that my peace or happiness does not depend upon external circumstances of this or any similar nature."[1]

Yet even in this free mood, Cobden knew his own mind, as he never failed to do, and he intended to be elected if possible. He belonged to the practical type, with whom to have once decided upon a course becomes in itself a strong independent reason for continuing in it. "One word as to your own private feelings," he writes to his brother, "which may from many causes be rather inclined to lead you to wish that my entrance into public life were delayed a little. I shall only say that on this head it is now too late to parley; it is now useless to waver, or to shrink from the realization of that which we had resolved upon and entered upon, not as children, but as men knowing that action must follow such resolves. Your temperament and mine are unequal, but in this matter I shall only remind you that *my* feelings are more deeply implicated than your own, and that whilst I can meet with an adequate share of fortitude any failure which comes from insuperable causes, whatever may be the object I have in view, yet if in this case my defeat should spring from your timidity or sensitiveness (shall I say *disinclination?*), it would afflict me severely, and I fear lastingly."[2]

As the election drew nearer, Cobden was overtaken by that eager desire to succeed, which gradually seizes even the most philosophical candidate as the passion of battle waxes hotter around him. He threw himself into the struggle

[1] *To F. C.* Jan. 4, 1837. [2] *To F. C.* Jan. 28, 1837.

with all his energy. It is historically interesting to know what Liberal electors were thinking about in those days. We find that they asked their candidate his opinion as to the property qualification for Members of Parliament, Primogeniture, the Poor Law Amendment Act, and the Factory Question. The last of the list was probably the most important, for Cobden had taken the trouble many months before to set out his opinions on that subject in a letter to the chairman of his committee. The matter remains of vital importance in our industrial system to the present time, and is still, in the face of the competition of other nations, the object of a controversy which is none the less alive in the region of theory, because the legislature has decided it in one way in the region of practice. As that is so, it is interesting still to know Cobden's earliest opinions on the matter; and I have therefore printed at the end of the volume the letter that Cobden wrote, in the autumn of 1836, on the restriction by Parliament of the hours of labour in factories.[4]

1837.
Æt. 33.

What he said comes to this, that for plain physical reasons no child ought to be put to work in a cotton mill so early as the age of thirteen, but whatever restrictions on the hours of labour might be desirable, it was not for the legislature to impose them: it was for the workmen to insist upon them, relying not on Parliament, but on their own action. A workman by saving the twenty pounds that would carry him across the Atlantic, could make himself as independent of his employer, as the employer is independent of him; and in this independence he would be free, without the emasculating interference of Parliament, to drive his own bargain as to how many hours he would work. In meeting his committee at Stockport, Cobden repeated his conviction that the factory operatives had it in their power

[4] See Appendix, Note A.

1837. Æt. 33. to shorten the hours of labour without the aid of Parliament, but to infant labour, as he had said before, he would afford the utmost possible protection. He laughed at the mock philanthropy of the Tory landowners, who took so lively an interest in the welfare of the factory population, and yet declined to suffer the slightest relaxation of the corn laws, though these did more to degrade and pauperize the labouring classes, by doubling the price of food and limiting employment, than any other evil of which they had to complain.

Whether these views alienated any of those who would otherwise have supported him, we do not know. Probably the most effective argument against Cobden's candidature was the fact that he was a stranger to the borough. On the day of election he was found to be at the bottom of the poll.[5] He wrote to his uncle, Mr. Cole, explaining his defeat:—

"The cause of failure was that there was *too much confidence* on the part of the reformers. We were too satisfied, and neglected those means of insuring the election which the Tories used, and by their activity at Stockport as elsewhere they gained the victory. If the battle had to be fought again to-morrow, I could win. To revenge themselves for the loss of their man, the Radicals have since the election adopted a system of exclusive dealing (*not countenanced by me*), and those publicans and shopkeepers who voted for the Major now find their counters deserted. The consequence is that the Reformers place printed placards over their shops, *Voted for Cobden,* inscribed in large characters, and the butchers and greengrocers in the market-place cry out from their stalls, Cobden beef, Cobden potatoes, etc. So you see I have not lost ground, by my

[5] Henry Marsland (Reformer) 480; Major Marsland (Tory) 471; Richard Cobden (Reformer) 418.

failure at the poll, with the unwashed. But the truth is I am quite reconciled to the result. There are many considerations which make me conclude it is all for the best."[6] 1837. Æt. 33.

His friends made arrangements for presenting him with a piece of plate, and seventeen thousand subscribers of one penny each raised the necessary fund. For some reason, Daniel O'Connell was invited to be present. He and Cobden drove together in an open carriage to Stockport (November 13, 1837), where they addressed an immense meeting in the open air, and afterwards spoke at a public dinner. To the great Liberator the reporter of the day generously accords three columns, while Cobden's words were condensed into that scanty space which is the common lot of orators who have won no spurs. His chief topic seems to have been the ballot; he declared that without that protection, household suffrage, the repeal of the corn laws, the shortening of parliaments, would all be insecure benefits. There is in this a certain inversion of his usual order of thinking about the proper objects of political solicitude, for he commonly paid much less heed to the machinery, than to the material objects of government.

It was quite as well for Cobden's personal interests that he was left free for a little time longer to attend to his business. The rather apprehensive character of his brother made him little able to carry on the trade in an intrepid and enterprising spirit, and at every step the judgment, skill, and energy of a stronger head were wanted. At this time the scale of the business which had started from such small beginnings, had become so extensive that Cobden estimated the capital in it as no less than 80,000*l.*, with a credit in acceptances of at least 25,000*l.*: he represented the turn-over as 150,000*l.*[7] In 1836 the books

[6] *To Mr. Cole.* Sept. 6, 1837.
[7] *Letter to F. Cobden.* Feb. 24, 1837.

1838. show that the nett profits of the firm had exceeded 23,000*l.*
ÆT. 34. for the year; and though the trade was so fluctuating that the first half of the following year only showed a profit of 4000*l.*, Cobden's sanguine temperament led him to speak as if their capital were being regularly augmented at the rate of 2000*l.* a month. We can easily understand Frederick Cobden's unwillingness to be left to his own resources in the administration of a business of this size, and his brother promised repeatedly not to throw so heavy a responsibility upon him. From the time of Cobden's return from the East they had both nourished the idea of separating from the London firm, as well as from the Sabden factory, and the idea remained in their minds for a couple of years. Then, as we shall presently see, it was carried into execution.

Cobden, however, had made up his mind after the Stockport election that to push his material fortunes was not to be the great aim of his life. "I am willing to give a few years of entire exertion," he wrote in 1838, "towards making the separation successful to ourselves. But at the same time all my exertions will be with an eye to make myself independent of all business claims on my time and anxieties. Towards this, Henry and Charles [their two younger brothers] will for their own sakes, I expect, contribute. And I hope and expect in five years they will be in a situation to *force* me out of the concern, a *willing exile*. At all events I am sure there will not want talent of some kind about us, to take advantage of my determination to be at ease, and have some time for leisure to take care of my health, and indulge tastes which are in some degree essential to my happiness. With reference to health, both you and I must not omit reasonable precautions; we are not made for rivalling Methusaleh, and if we can by care stave off the grim enemy for twenty years longer, we shall do more than nature intended for us. At all events

let us remember that to live usefully is far better than living long. And do not let us deprive ourselves of the gratification at last, a gratification which the selfish never have, that we have not embittered our whole lives with heaping up money, but that we have given a part of our time to more rational and worthy exertions."[1] 1838. ÆT. 34.

Even now, when the indispensable work of laying a base of material prosperity was still incomplete, and when his own business might well have occupied his whole attention, he was always thinking much more earnestly about the interests of others than his own. The world of contemporaries and neighbours seldom values or loves this generous and unfamiliar spirit, and the tone of Manchester was in this respect not much higher than that of the rest of the world. It cannot surprise us to learn that for some time Cobden made no great progress in Manchester society. He was extremely self-possessed and self-confident, and as a consequence he was often thought to be wanting in the respect that is due from a young man to his elders, and from a man who has a fortune to make, towards those who have made it. His dash, his freedom of speech, his ardour for new ideas, were taken for signs of levity; and a certain airy carelessness about dress marked a rebel against the minor conventions of the world. The patient endurance of mere ceremonial was at this time impossible to him. He could not be brought to attend the official dinners given by the Lord of the Manor. When he was selected to serve as assessor at the Court-leet for manorial purposes, though the occasion brought him into contact with men who might have been useful to him in his business, he treated the honour very easily. He sat restlessly on his bench, and then strolled away after an hour or two had shown him that the proceedings were without real

[1] *To F. C.* Oct. 26, 1838.

1838. significance. He could not even understand the urgency
ÆT. 34. of more prudent friends that he should return. It was not conceit nor conscious defiance, but the incapacity inborn in so active and serious an intelligence, of contentedly muffling itself even for half a day under idle forms. He was born a political man; his most real interests in the world were wholly in affairs of government and institution, and his dominant passion was a passion for improvement. His whole mind was possessed by the high needs and great opportunities of society, as the minds of some other men have been possessed by the aspirations of religion, and he had as little humour for the small things of worldly punctilio as Calvin or as Knox may have had.

I have already described the relation of some of Cobden's ideas to those of George Combe. It was, above all other things, for the sake of the prospect which it held out of supplying a sure basis and a trustworthy guide in the intricate and encumbered path of national education, that he was drawn for a time to Combe's system of phrenology. His letters during the years of which we are now speaking abound pretty freely in the terms of that crude catalogue, but with him they are less like the jargon of the phrenological fanatic of those days, than the good-humoured language of a man who believes in a general way that there is something in it. In 1835 he had been instrumental in forming a phrenological society in Manchester, and the first of a series of letters to Combe is one in 1836, pressing him to deliver a course of lectures in that town. It is interesting as an illustration of the amazing growth both in rational tolerance and scientific opinion, when we compare the very moderate heterodoxy of phrenology with the doctrines that in our own day are publicly discussed without alarm. "The Society which we profess to have here," Cobden writes, "is not well supported, and for nearly a

twelvemonth it can hardly be said to have manifested many signs of existence. 1836. Æt. 32.

"The causes are various why phrenology languishes, but probably the primary one may be sought in that feeling of fashionable timidity among the leading medical men and others who, although professing to support it privately, have not yet openly avowed themselves disciples of the science of Spurzheim and Gall. But phrenology is rapidly disenthralling itself from that 'cold obstruction' of ridicule and obloquy, which it has, in common with every other reform and improvement, had to contend against, and probably the mind of the community of Manchester presents at this moment as fine a field, in which to sow the seeds of instruction by means of a course of lectures by the author of *The Constitution of Man*, as could be found anywhere in the world. . . . . The difficulty of religious prejudice exists here, and it requires delicate handling. Thanks, however, to the pursuits of the neighbourhood, to the enlightening chemical and mechanical studies with which our industry is allied, and to the mind-invigorating effect of an energetic devotion to commerce, we are not, as at Liverpool, in a condition to tolerate rampant exhibitions of intolerance here. . . . . The High Church party stands sullenly aloof from all useful projects, and the severer sectarians restrict themselves here, as elsewhere, to their own narrow sphere of exertion, but the tone of public opinion in Manchester is superior to the influence of either of these extremes. How I pity you in Scotland, the only country in the world in which a wealthy and intelligent middling class submits to the domination of a spiritual tyranny."*

Though he was intolerant of the small politics of the Borough-reeve and the Constables, Cobden did not count it as small politics to agitate with might and main on behalf

* *To George Combe.* Aug. 23, 1836.

1838. of the incorporation of the great city to which he belonged.
ÆT. 34. His large comprehension of the greater needs of civilization and his country never at any time in his life dulled his interest in the need that lay close to his hand. The newspapers of the time show him to have been the moving spirit in the proceedings for incorporation, from the first requisition to the Borough-reeve and Constable to call a meeting of the rate-payers (February 3, 1838), down to the final triumph.

The Municipal Reform Act had been passed by Lord Melbourne's Government in 1835, on the return of the Whigs to power after the short ministry of Sir Robert Peel. It was the proper complement to the greater Reform of 1832. By extending the principle of self-government from national to local affairs, it purified and enlarged the organs of administrative power, and furnished new fields of discipline in the habits of the good citizen. In 1833 Brougham had introduced a measure for immediately incorporating such towns as Manchester and Birmingham, and directly conferring local representative government upon them by Act of Parliament. But between 1833 and 1835 things had happened which quenched these spirited methods. A process which had been imperative in 1833, had by 1835 dwindled down to the permissive. Places were allowed to have charters, on condition that a majority of the ratepayers, being inhabitant householders, expressed their desire for incorporation by petition to the Crown in Council. A muddy sea of corruption and chicane was stirred up. All the vested interests of obstruction were on the alert. The close and self-chosen members of the Court Leet, and the Streets Commission, and the Town Hall Commission, could not endure the prospect of a system in which the public business would no longer be done in the dark, and the

public money no longer expended without responsibility 1838.
to those who paid it. The battle between privilege and Æt. 34.
popular representation which had been fought on the great scene at Westminster in 1832, was now resumed and fought out on the pettier stage of the new boroughs. The classes who had lost the power of bad government on a large national scale, tried hard to retain it on a small local scale. The low-minded and corrupt rabble of freemen and pot-wallopers united with those who were on principle the embittered enemies of all improvement, the noisy, inglorious Eldons of the provincial towns, and did their best to thwart the petitions. The Tories and the Residuum, to use the phrase of a later day, made that alliance which Cobden calls unholy, but which rests on the natural affinities of bigotry and ignorance. The Whig, as usual, was timid and uncomfortable; he went about murmuring that a charter was unnecessary, and muttered something about expense.

"When your former kind and friendly letter reached me," Cobden writes to Tait, the Edinburgh publisher, "I was engaged before the Commissioners, employed in exposing the trickery of the Tories in getting up their petition against the incorporation of our borough. For three weeks I was incessantly occupied at the Town Hall. By dint of hard work and some expense, we got at the filth in their Augean stable, and laid their dirty doings before the public eye. I believe now there is little doubt of our being chartered before the next November election, and it will be a new era for Manchester when it shakes off the feudal livery of Sir Oswald Mosley, to put on the democratic garb of the Municipal Reform Act. .

"So important do I consider the step for incorporating the borough, that I have been incessantly engaged at the task for the last six months. I began by writing a letter of which I circulated five thousand copies, with a view of

1838. ÆT. 34. gaining the Radicals by showing the popular provisions of the Act. Will you credit it—the low, blackguard leaders of the Radicals joined with the Tories and opposed us. The poor-law lunatics raised their demented yell, and we were menaced with nothing but defeat and annihilation at the public meeting. However, we sent a circular to every one of the 10*l.* parliamentary electors who support liberal men, calling upon them to aid us at the public meeting, and they came forward to our rescue. The *shopocracy* carried the day. Two or three of the Tory-Radical leaders now entered the service of the Tories, with a view to obtain the signature of their fellows to a petition against incorporation. They pretended to get upwards of thirty thousand names, for which they were well paid. But the voting has shown that four-fifths were forgeries. So much for the unholy alliance of Tory and Radical!

"I mention all this as my best excuse for not having written to you, or for you, for so many months. What with going twice to London on deputations, and fighting the battle with two extreme political parties in Manchester, I have been so constantly engaged in action, that I have not had time for theorizing upon any topic. Still I have not abandoned the design of using my pen for your magazine. I have half collected materials for an article on convulsions in trade and banking, which when published will probably attract some notice from people engaged in such pursuits."[1]

"Not having received a word of news, good or bad, from you since I came here," he wrote to his brother, "I conclude that nothing particularly important can have occurred. You will have heard, I dare say, the result of our interview with the Lords of the Council. There is, I think, not a shadow of doubt of the ultimate result of the application, but I am not pleased with the Whig Ministry's mode of

[1] *To Mr. W. Tait, of Edinburgh.* July 3, 1838.

proceeding in these Corporation affairs. It is quite certain that they are willing we should be put to quite as much trouble by the Tories, as that party is able to impose on us. In the case of the Sheffield petition, I do not think the Charter will be granted at all, merely because the Tories have contrived to get a greater number of ragamuffins to sign against it, than have subscribed for the Charter. I saw one of the deputation to-day, who is quite disgusted with the whole set; and Scholefield of Birmingham told me that if he and Attwood had not bullied the Whigs, and threatened to vote against them, the Birmingham petition would not have been acceded to. They are a bad lot, and the sooner they go out, the better for the real reformers."[2]

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"That truckling subserviency," he writes later in this year, "of the Ministry to the menaces of the Tories, is just in character with the conduct of the Whigs, on all questions great or little. Without principle or political honesty, they are likewise destitute of any atom of the courage or independence which honesty can inspire, and the party which bullies them most will be sure to command their obedience. In the matter of municipal institutions their hearts are against us. C. P. Thomson[3] told us plainly that he did not like local self-government, and are his Whig colleagues more liberal than he? I am sorry I am not at home to give a helping hand to my old colleagues. I will never desert, and if the matter be still in abeyance when I get back, I shall be ready and willing to give my assistance."

[2] To *F. W. Cobden* London, May 4, 1838.

[3] Charles Poulett Thomson, afterwards Lord Sydenham, was one of the representatives of Manchester from 1832 to 1839. On the reconstruction of the Whig Government under Lord Melbourne, he was appointed to be President of the Board of Trade—a post which he afterwards gave up, in order to go out as Governor-General of Canada. As we shall see in a later chapter, he has a place in the apostolic succession of the Board of Trade, after Huskisson and Deacon Hume.

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In the autumn of 1838, Lancashire was disturbed by torchlight meetings, destruction of property, and other formidable proceedings, under the lead of the Chartists,—Stephens, Oastler, and others. This superficial outbreak had no alarms for Cobden. In a vein which is thoroughly characteristic of the writer, he proceeds in the letter from which I have been quoting :—

"As respects general politics, I see nothing in the present radical outbreak to cause alarm, or make one dread the fate of liberalism. On the contrary, it is preferable to the apathy of the three years when prosperity (or seemingly so) made Tories of all. Nor do I feel at all inclined to give up politics in disgust, as you seem to do, because of the blunders of the Radicals. They are rash and presumptuous, or ignorant if you will, but are not the governing factions something worse? Is not selfishness, or systematic plunder, or political knavery as odious as the blunders of democracy? We must choose between the party which governs upon an exclusive or monopoly principle, and the people who seek, though blindly perhaps, the good of the vast majority. If they be in error we must try to put them right, if rash to moderate; but *never, never* talk of giving up the ship. . . . . *I think the scattered elements may yet be rallied round the question of the corn laws. It appears to me that a moral and even a religious spirit may be infused into that topic, and if agitated in the same manner that the question of slavery has been, it will be irresistible.* I can give this question a great lift when I return, by publishing the result of my inquiries into the state of things on the Continent, and particularly with reference to the Prussian Union."[4]

Yet Cobden had in his heart no illusions on the subject of his countrymen, or their special susceptibility to either

[4] *To F. C.* Oct. 5, 1838.

light or enthusiasm. He was well aware of the strong vault 1838.
of bronzed prejudice which man mistakes for the luminous ÆT. 34.
firmament of truth, and with him as with the philosophic reformers in France on the eve of the Revolution, the foundation of his hope lay in a *peuple éclairé,* the enlightenment of the population.

"Do not let your zeal for the cause of democracy," Cobden wrote to Tait, the Edinburgh bookseller, "deceive you as to the fact of the *opaque ignorance* in which the great bulk of the people of England are wrapt. If you write for the masses politically, and write soundly and honestly, they will not be able at present to appreciate you, and consequently will not support you. You cannot pander to the new Poor-law delusion, or mix up the Corn laws with the Currency quackeries of Attwood. Nothing but these cries will go down with the herd at present. There is an obvious motive about certain agitators' movements. They hold up *impracticabilities*; their stock in trade will not fall short. Secondly, these prevent intelligent people from joining said agitators, who would be likely to supersede them in the eyes of their followers. There is no remedy for all this but improved education. Such as the tail and the body are, such will be the character of the head. Nature does not produce such monsters as an ignorant or vicious community, and virtuous and wise leaders. In Scotland you are better off because you are better educated. The great body of the English peasants are not a jot advanced in intellect since the days of their Saxon ancestors.

"I hope you will join us in a cry for schoolmasters as a first step to Radicalism. . . . Whilst I would caution you against too much political stuff in your magazine, let me pray you to strike a blow for us for education. I have unbounded faith in the people, and would risk universal suffrage to-morrow in preference to the present franchise.

1838. Æt. 34. But we shall never obtain even an approach towards such a change, except by one of two paths—Revolution or the Schoolhouse. By the latter means we shall make permanent reform; by the former we shall only effect convulsive and transient changes, to fall back again like Italy, or Spain, into despotism or anarchy."[5]

In August, 1838, Cobden again started for a month's tour in Germany, partly perhaps to appease that spirit of restlessness which made monotony the worst kind of fatigue, and partly to increase his knowledge of the economic condition of other countries. "What nonsense," he once exclaimed, "is uttered even by the cleverest men when they get upon that least of all understood, and yet most important of all topics, the Trade of this country! And yet every dunce or aristocratic blockhead fancies himself qualified by nature to preach upon this complicated and difficult question."[6] He was careful not to lay himself open to the same reproach of trusting to the light of nature for wide and accurate knowledge, and he turned his holiday in the countries of the Elbe and the Rhine to good account by getting together, as he said, some ammunition about the corn laws. This subject was now beginning definitely to take the chief place in his interests.

There remains among his correspondence with his brother during this trip, one rather remarkable letter, the doctrine of which many of my readers will certainly resent, and it is indeed open to serious criticism. The doctrine, however, is too characteristic of a peculiarity in Cobden's social theory, for me to omit this strong illustration of it; characteristic, I mean, of his ruling willingness, shown particularly in his dealings with the Emperor of the French in 1860, and on some other occasions, to treat political con-

[5] *To W. Tait.* Aug. 17, 1838.

[6] *To W. Tait.* May 5, 1837.

siderations as secondary to those of social and economic well-being. 1838. Æt. 34.

"Although," he says, "a very rapid one, my journey has given me a better insight into German character and the prospects of central Europe than I could have ever gained from the eyes of others. Prussia must be looked upon as a rising state, whose greatness will be based upon the Commercial League [the Zollverein].[7] . . . . The effect of the League must inevitably be to throw the preponderating influence over thirty millions of people into the hands of the Cabinet of Berlin. By the terms of the Union, the money is to be collected and paid by Prussia; a very little financial skill will thus very easily make the smaller states the pensioners of the paymaster. Already, I am told, Prussia has been playing this game; she is said to be two millions of dollars a year out of pocket by her office, owing to her having guaranteed the smaller partners certain amounts of revenue. Besides the power that such a post of treasurer will confer upon Prussia, other causes must tend to weaken the influence of the lesser states' governments. A common standard of weights and measures, as well as of money, is preparing, and these being assimilated, and the revenue received from Prussia, whose literature and modes will become the standard for the other portions of Germany, what shall prevent this entire family of one common language, and possessing perfect freedom of intercourse, from merging into one nation? In fact they are substantially one nation now, and their remaining subdivisions will

[7] The Zollverein or Customs Union had been planned as far back as 1818, but it was not until 1833 that the treaty was signed which bound most of the German states, except Austria, to a policy of free trade among themselves, while protective duties were maintained against foreign nations. Poulett Thomson and other English officials of the same liberal stamp, rightly regarded the new system without apprehension, for it recognized the expediency of abolishing commercial restrictions over a great area, though the area was not quite great enough.

1838. ÆT. 34. become by-and-by only imaginary; and some Radicals will hereafter propose, as we have done in Manchester, to get rid of the antiquated boundaries of the *townships* of Hesse, Oldenburg, etc., and place the whole under one Common Council at Berlin. There are heads in Berlin which have well reflected upon this, and their measures will not disappoint their country.

"I very much suspect that at present, for the great mass of the people, Prussia possesses the best government in Europe. I would gladly give up my taste for talking politics to secure such a state of things in England. Had our people such a simple and economical government, so deeply imbued with justice to all, and aiming so constantly to elevate mentally and morally its population, how much better would it be for the twelve or fifteen millions in the British Empire, who, while they possess no electoral rights, are yet persuaded they are freemen, and who are mystified into the notion that they are not political bondmen, by that great juggle of the '*English Constitution*'—a thing of monopolies, and Church-craft, and sinecures, armorial hocus-pocus, primogeniture, and pageantry! The Government of Prussia is the mildest phase in which absolutism ever presented itself. The king, a good and just man, has, by pursuing a systematic course of popular education, shattered the sceptre of despotism even in his own hand, and has for ever prevented his successors from gathering up the fragments. . . . You have sometimes wondered what becomes of the thousands of learned men who continually pass from the German universities, whilst so few enter upon mercantile pursuits. Such men hold all the official and Government appointments; and they do not require 1000*l.* a year to be respectable or respected in Prussia. Habits of ostentatious expenditure are not respectable there. The king dines at two, rides in a plain carriage, without soldiers or attendants,

and dresses in a kind of soldier's relief cap. The plays begin at six and close at nine, and all the world goes to bed at ten or eleven."[1] 1838. ÆT. 34.

It is to be remembered in reading this, that it was written forty years ago. Not a few considerate observers even now hold that the prospect of German progress which Cobden sketches, would have been happily realized, if Prussian statesmen of a bad school had not interrupted the working of orderly forces by a policy of military violence which precipitated unity, it is true, but at a cost to the best causes in Germany and Europe, for which unity, artificial and unstable as it now is, can be no worthy recompense. As for the contempt which the passage breathes for the English constitution, it is easy to understand the disgust which a statesman with the fervour of his prime upon him, and with an understanding at once too sincere and too strong to be satisfied with conventional shibboleths, might well feel alike for the hypocrisy and the shiftlessness of a system, that behind the artfully painted mask of popular representation concealed the clumsy machinery of a rather dull plutocracy. It is not right to press the phrases of the hasty letter of a traveller too closely. If, as it is reasonable to think, Cobden only meant that the energetic initiative of central authorities in promoting the moralization of a country is indispensable in the thick populations and divided interests of modern times, and that the great want of England is not a political equality which she has got, nor a natural equality, which neither England nor any other country is ever likely to get, but a real equality in access to justice and in chances of mental and moral elevation,—then he was feeling his way to the very truths which, of all others, it is most wholesome for us to understand and to accept. Whatever we may think of the good word which

[1] *To F. Cobden.* Sept. 11, 1838.

1838. Æt. 34.

Cobden seems to have for beneficent absolutism, it is at least a mark of true sagacity to have discerned that manners may have as much to do with the happiness of a people, as has the form of their government.

In a letter to his sister, he shows that his journey has supplied him with material for an instructive contrast:—

"Let me give you an idea of society here by telling you how I spent yesterday, being *Sunday*. In the first place I went to the cathedral church at nine o'clock in the morning, a very large building, pretty well filled (the ladies were as five to one in the congregation, against the number of male attendants).

"The singing would have been a treat; but unhappily I was placed beside a little old man whose devotion was so great, that he sang louder than all the congregation, in a screaming tone that pierced my tympanum. I heard nothing but the deep notes of the organ, and the little man's notes still ring in my ears, and his ugly little persevering face will haunt me till I reach the Rhine. The sermon lasted forty minutes; the service was all over in one hour and a half, and at eleven o'clock I went in a coach to the country palace of the king at Charlottenburg, where is a splendid mausoleum and a statue of his late wife to be seen. The statue is a masterpiece of the first Prussian sculptor, and as I always criticise masterpieces, I thought it stiff. Passing through a wood laid out in pleasant walks, interspersed with sheets of water and provided with seats, I saw numbers of the cockneys strolling about, and again I might have fancied myself in Kensington Gardens. But the variety of head-dress, the frequent absence of the odious bonnet which seems a part of the Englishwoman's nature, and the substitution of the lace or gauze covering, which aids rather than hides the prettiest accessory of a woman's face, her well-managed hair, reminded me that I was from home. It

was a quarter to two as I returned, and I met the king's sons going to dine with their father, who takes that meal exactly at two. So you see we are not so unfashionable in Quay Street as we imagined. After taking a hasty dinner myself, I hired a horse and rode again into the country by another road, and visited the Tivoli Gardens. On the way I passed some good houses, the families of which were all outside, either in balconies or in the gardens before the door, with tables laid out with refreshments, at which the gentlemen were smoking, the ladies knitting or sewing, and perhaps the children playing around with frolicsome glee. All this close to the great thoroughfare to Tivoli, along which crowds of pedestrians of all ranks, and great numbers of carriages and horsemen, were proceeding. Yet nobody turned his head to sneer, or to insult others; there was no intrusion or curiosity. I thought of old England, and as I knew it would be impossible there to witness such a scene, I hope I did right in condemning the good people of Berlin for their *irreligious* conduct. At the Tivoli Gardens, which are about two miles from the town, they have a good view of the city. Here are Montagnes Russes and other amusements. The day was splendid, and such a scene! Hundreds of well-dressed and still better behaved people were lounging or sitting in the large gardens, or several buildings of this gay retreat; in the midst were many little tables at which groups were sitting. The ladies had their work-bags, and were knitting, or sewing, or chatting, or sipping coffee or lemonade; the gentlemen often smoking, or perhaps flirting with their party. Then the scene at the Montagnes Russes! The little carriages were rattling down one after another along this undulating railroad with parties of every kind and age, from the old officer to the kitten-like child, who clung with all its claws to the nurse, or sister, or mamma who gave it the treat. Then there was music, and after-

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wards fireworks, and so went off the day at Tivoli, without clamour, rudeness, or drunkenness. After Tivoli I looked in at the two principal theatres, which were crammed; and so ended the day which to me was not a day of rest. If you think this is an improper picture of a Protestant Sunday, on the other hand, the sober and orderly German thinks the drunkenness, the filthy public-houses, the miserable and moping mechanic that pines in his dark alley in our English cities on the Sabbath-day, are infinitely worse features of a Protestant community, than his Tivoli Gardens. Are both wrong?"[2]

With one other and final contrast, we may leave the memorials of the foreign tour of 1838:—

"I do hope the leather-headed bipeds who soak themselves upon prosperous market-days in brandy and water at the White Bear, will be brought to the temperature of rational beings by the last twelve months' regimen of low prices. And then let us hope that we may see them trying at least to bestow a little thought upon their own interests, in matters beyond the range of their factory walls. It humiliates me to think of the class of people at home, who belong to the order of intelligent and educated men that I see on the Continent, following the business of manufacturing, spinning, etc. Our countrymen, if they were possessed of a little of the *mind* of the merchants and manufacturers of Frankfort, Chemnitz, Elberfeld, etc., would become the De Medicis, and Fuggers, and De Witts of England, instead of glorying in being the toadies of a clodpole aristocracy, only less enlightened than themselves!"[1]

In other words they would become the powerful and independent statesmen of the country, the creators and champions of a new policy adapted to the ends of a great trading community. Thrusting aside the nobles by force

[2] *To Miss Cobden.* Sept. 3, 1838.

[1] *To F. C.* Oct. 6, 1838.

of vigorous intellectual and moral ascendency, the wealthy middle class would place themselves at the head of a national life with new types and wiser ideals. Any one who reflects on the gain for good causes in England, if only the foremost men of this class would dare to be themselves, and show by grave and self-respecting example that a great citizen is beyond the rivalry of the great noble, will cherish the vision that passed for an instant before Cobden's social imagination. As for his contrast between the educated traders of the continent, and the haunters of the White Bear with their leathern heads, we may be sure that all this was the result of true observation, and was due to no childish propensity to think everything abroad better than anything at home. Cobden had far too much integrity of understanding to yield either to the patriotic bias, or the anti-patriotic bias; and he knew able men when he saw them, as well in his own country as elsewhere.

In the summer of the previous year he had, in one of his visits to London, sought the acquaintance of some of the prominent journalists and politicians, and he wrote down his impressions of them.

"Yesterday,"—this was in June, 1837—"we went along with Cole to see the print-works of Surrey, and dined with Makepeace. The day before, being Sunday, I went in the morning to hear Benson (in the Temple Church) abuse the Dissenters and the Catholics, and compare the persecuted Church of England to the ark of the Israelites, when encompassed by the Amalekites. . : . Then I went to the Zoological Gardens, and after staying there till the last minute, I accompanied Cole home to his house, and dined and slept. . . . . On Saturday in the morning I was at the Clubs; was introduced to Fonblanque (*Examiner*), Rintoul (*Spectator*), Bowring, Howard Elphinstone, etc. In the evening of the same day I dined with Hindley, and met ——, ——, ——,

1837. Æt. 33. etc., etc. [a party of north-country members of parliament and candidates.] They are a sad lot of soulless louts, and I was, as compared with the intellectual atmosphere of the morning, precipitated from the temperature of blood heat down to zero. . . . I have not seen C. P. Thomson. I have left my card and address, but he has not noticed it, and if he does not send, I'll not call again.

"I hear queer accounts of our Right Hon. Member; they tell me he is not the man of business we take him for. We shall see. *The more I see of our representatives from Lancashire, the more ashamed I feel at being so served,* and like Falstaff I begin to dread the idea of going through Coventry (for at Coventry they are generally to be found) with such a crew. I suppose you will have more failures by-and-by amongst the people at Manchester and Liverpool. I begin now to fear that our distress will be greater and more permanent than I had expected at first. It will be felt here, too, for some time, in failures amongst those old merchant princes who are princes only at spending, but whose gettings have been and will be small enough. The result of all will be that Liverpool and Manchester will more and more assume their proper rank as commercial capitals. London must content itself with a gambling trade in the bills drawn by those places.

"I have had invitations without end, and shall if I stay a year still be in request; but too much talking and running about will not suit me, and I am resolved to turn churlish and morose. I have seen, through S——'s friend T——, some of the Urquhart party: they are as mad as ever. I have called upon Roebuck, but have not been able to see him."[1]

"I was yesterday introduced to Mrs. and Mr. Grote at their house. I use the words Mrs. and Mr. because she is

[1] *To F. Cobden.* June 6, 1837.

the greater politician of the two. He is a mild and philosophical man, possessing the highest order of moral and intellectual endowments; but wanting something which for need of a better phrase I shall call *devil*. He is too abstract in his tone of reasoning, and does not aim to influence others by any proof excepting that of ratiocination; *tusy musy*, as Braham calls it, he is destitute of. Had she been a man, she would have been the leader of a party; he is not calculated for it. 1837. ÆT. 33.

"I met at their house (which by the way is the great resort of all that is clever in the opposition ranks) Sir W. Molesworth, a youthful, florid-looking man of foppish and conceited air, with a pile of head at the back (firmness) like a sugar-loaf. I should say that a cast of his head would furnish one of the most singular illustrations of phrenology. For the rest he is not a man of superior talents, and let him *say* what he pleases, there is nothing about him that is democratic in principle. . . . .

"I have been visiting, and visited by, all sorts of people, the Greek Ambassador, Wm. Allen, of Plough Court, the chemist and Quaker philanthropist, Roebuck, and Joseph Parkes, of Birmingham, amongst the number. I spent a couple of hours with Roebuck at his house. He *is* a clever fellow, but I find that his mind is more active than powerful. He is apt to take lawyer-like views of questions, and, as you may see by his speeches, is given to cavilling and special pleading. . . . .

"Easthope of the 'Chronicle,' is very anxious that I should see Lord Palmerston, but I told him I had made up my mind that his Lordship is incurable. He says that he is open to conviction, and a cleverer man than most of his colleagues. What a beautiful *ensemble* they must be! I have seen nothing of C. P. Thomson; I would have called again, but I think it better to reserve myself till he calls on me. I hear from all sides that he is not the man

1837. Æt. 33. of business we take him for in Manchester. Although I have been so much taken up with new acquaintances, I have not failed to make calls upon all our old friends and relations."[3]

"One of the very cleverest men I have ever met with is Joseph Parkes, late of Birmingham, the eminent constitutional lawyer and writer. He was employed to prepare the Municipal Bill and other measures. He is not only profound in his profession, but skilled in political economy, and quite up to the spirit of the age in practical and popular acquirements. He has been very civil to me. He received a letter from his friend Lord Durham requesting him to find out who the author of *Russia*, etc., was, as those pamphlets contained more statesmanlike views than all the heads of the whole British cabinet. His lordship goes thoroughly and entirely with me in my principles upon Turkey. Perhaps the truth is he went to St. Petersburg with opposite views, but having been wheedled by the Czar and his wife, he is glad to find in my arguments some useful pleas for justifying his change."[4]

One general impression of great significance Cobden acquired from this and some later visits to London. Combe had in one of his letters been complaining of the bigotry with which he had to contend in Scotland. "What you say of the intolerance of Scotland," said Cobden to him in reply, "applies a good deal to Manchester also. There is but one place in the kingdom in which a man can live with perfect freedom of thought and action, and that is London."[5] However, he acted on the old and worthy principle, *Spartam*

[3] *To F. Cobden.* June 12, 1837

[4] The Czar said to Sir Robert Peel:—"Years ago Lord Durham was sent to me, a man full of prejudices against me. By merely coming to close quarters with me, all his prejudices were driven clean out of him."—Stockmar, quoted in Mr. Martin's *Life of the Prince Consort*, i. 216.

[5] *To G. Combe.* March 9 1841.

nactus es, hanc exorna, and did not quarrel with the society 1838.
in which his lot was cast, because it preferred the echoes of ÆT. 34.
its own prejudices to any unfamiliar note.

Manchester did not receive its charter of incorporation until the autumn of 1838. Cobden's share in promoting this important reform was recognized by the inhabitants of the new borough, and he was chosen for alderman at the first election. The commercial capital of Lancashire was now to show its fitness to be the source and centre of a great national cause.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE LEAGUE.

1838. ÆT. 34. THE French economist who recounted to his countrymen the history of the great agitation in which Cobden now gradually rose to a foremost place, justly pointed out that the name and title of the Anti-Corn-Law League gave to foreigners a narrow and inadequate idea of its scope, its depth, and its animating spirit. What Bastiat thus said with regard to foreigners, is just as true with regard to ourselves of a later generation. We too are as apt as Frenchmen or Germans to think narrowly and inadequately of the scope and animating spirit of this celebrated confederation. Yet the interest of that astonishing record of zeal, tact, devotion, and courage, into some portions of which the biographer of Cobden has now to enter, lies principally for us in the circumstance that the abolition of the protective duties on food and the shattering of the protective system was, on one side, the beginning of our great modern struggle against class preponderance at home, and on another side, the dawn of higher ideals of civilization all over the world.

It was not of himself assuredly that Cobden was speaking, when at the moment of the agitation reaching its height, he confessed that when it first began they had not all possessed the same comprehensive view of the interests and objects involved, that came to them later. "I am afraid," he said,

"that most of us entered upon this struggle with the belief that we had some distinct class-interest in the question, and that we should carry it by a manifestation of our will in this district, against the will and consent of other portions of the community."[1] There was in this nothing that is either astonishing or discreditable. The important fact was that the class-interest of the manufacturers and merchants happened to fall in with the good of the rest of the community; while the class-interest against which they were going up to do battle, was an uncompensated burden on the whole commonwealth. Besides this, it has been observed on a hundred occasions in history, that a good cause takes on in its progress larger and unforeseen elements, and these in their turn bring out the nobler feelings of the best among its soldiers. So it was here. The class-interest widened into the consciousness of a commanding national interest. In raising the question of the bread-tax, and its pestilent effects on their own trade and on the homes of their workmen, the Lancashire men were involuntarily opening the whole question of the condition of England.

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The backbone of the discussion in its strictly local aspect was in the question which Cobden and his friends at this time kept incessantly asking. With a population increasing at the rate of a thousand souls a day, how can wages be kept up, unless there be constantly increasing markets found for the employment of labour; and how can foreign countries buy our manufactures, unless we take in return their corn, timber, or whatever else they are able to produce? Apart, moreover, from increase of population, is it not clear that if capitalists were free to exchange their productions for the corn of other countries, the workmen would have abundant employment at enhanced wages? A still more formidable argument even than these lay in the mouths of the petitioners.

[1] Speech at Manchester, Oct. 19, 1843.

1838. They boldly charged Parliament with fostering the rivalry of
ÆT. 34. foreign competitors; and the charge could not be answered. By denying to America and to Germany the liberty of exchanging their surplus food for our manufactures, the English Legislature had actually forced America and Germany to divert their resources from the production of food, in order to satisfy their natural demand for manufactures. It was the corn laws which nursed foreign competition into full vitality.

But this strictly commercial aspect could not suffice. Moral ideas of the relations of class to class in this country, and of the relations of country to country in the civilized world, lay behind the contention of the hour, and in the course of that contention came into new light. The promptings of a commercial shrewdness were gradually enlarged into enthusiasm for a far-reaching principle, and the hard-headed man of business gradually felt himself touched with the generous glow of the patriot and the deliverer.

Cobden's speculative mind had speedily placed the conflict in its true relation to other causes. We have already seen how ample a conception he possessed of the transformation for which English society was ripe, and how thoroughly he had accustomed himself to think of the corn laws as merely part of a great whole of abuse and obstruction. But he was now, as at all times, far too wise a man to fall into the characteristic weakness of the system-monger, by passing over the work that lay to his hand, and insisting that people should swallow his system whole. Nobody knew better how great a part of wisdom it is for a man who seeks to improve society, to be right in discerning at a given moment what is the next thing to be done, or whether there is anything to be done at all. His interest in remoter issues did not prevent him from throwing himself with all the energy of apostolic spirit upon the par-

ticular point at which the campaign of a century first opened. 1838.
As he said to his brother in a letter that has already been ÆT. 34
quoted, he had convinced himself that a moral, and even a religious, spirit might be infused into the question of the corn laws, and that if it were agitated in the same manner as the old question of slavery, the effect would be irresistible.[2]

Cobden was in no sense the original projector of an organized body for throwing off the burden of the corn duties. In 1836 an Anti-Corn-Law Association had been formed in London; its principal members were the parliamentary radicals, Grote, Molesworth, Joseph Hume, and Mr. Roebuck. But this group, notwithstanding their acuteness, their logical penetration, and the soundness of their ideas, were in that, as in so many other matters, stricken with impotence. Their gifts of reasoning were admirable, but they had no gifts for popular organization, and neither their personality nor their logic offered anything to excite the imagination or interest the sentiment of the public. "The free-traders," Lord Sydenham said, with a pang, in 1841, "have never been orators since Mr. Pitt's early days. We hammered away with facts and figures and some arguments; but we could not elevate the subject and excite the feelings of the people." An economic demonstration went for nothing, until it was made alive by the passion of suffering interests and the reverberations of the popular voice. Lord Melbourne, in 1838, sharply informed all petitioners for the repeal of the corn-laws, that they must look for no decided action on the part of the government, until they had made it quite clear that the majority of the nation were strongly in favour of a new policy. London, from causes that have often been explained and are well understood, is no centre for the kind of agitation which the Prime Minister, not without some secret mockery, invited

[2] Above, p. 126.

1838. Ær. 34. the repealers to undertake. In London there is no effective unity; interests are too varied and dispersive; zeal loses its directness and edge amid the distracting play of so many miscellaneous social and intellectual elements. It was not until a body of men in Manchester were moved to take the matter in hand, that any serious attempt was made to inform and arouse the country.

The price of wheat had risen to seventy-seven shillings in the August of 1838; there was every prospect of a wet harvesting; the revenue was declining; deficit was becoming a familiar word; pauperism was increasing; and the manufacturing population of Lancashire were finding it impossible to support themselves, because the landlords, and the legislation of a generation of landlords before them, insisted on keeping the first necessity of life at an artificially high rate. Yet easy as it is now to write the explanation contained in the last few words, comparatively few men had at that time seized the truth of it. That explanation was in the stage of a vague general suspicion, rather than the definite perception of a precise cause. Men are so engaged by the homely pressure of each day as it comes, and the natural solicitudes of common life are so instant, that a bad institution or a monstrous piece of misgovernment is always endured in patience for many years after the remedy has been urged on public attention. No cure is considered with an accurate mind, until the evil has become too sharp to be borne, or its whole force and weight brought irresistibly before the world by its more ardent, penetrative, and indomitable spirits.

In October, 1838, a band of seven men met at a hotel in Manchester, and formed a new Anti-Corn-Law Association. They were speedily joined by others, including Cobden, who from this moment began to take a prominent part in all counsel and action.

That critical moment had arrived, which comes in the history of every successful movement, when a section arises within the party, which refuses from that day forward either to postpone or to compromise. The feeling among the older men was to stop short in their demands at some modification of the existing duty. This was the mind of the President and most of the directors of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce. A meeting of this important body was held in December (1838). The officers of the Chamber had, only for the second time in ten years, prepared a petition to the House of Commons, but the petition spoke only of modifications, and total repeal was not whispered. The more energetic members protested against these faltering voices. Cobden struck into the debate with that finely tempered weapon of argumentative speech, which was his most singular endowment. The turbid sediment of miscellaneous discussion sank away, as he brought out a lucid proof that the corn law was the only obstacle to a vast increase of their trade, and that every shilling of the protection on corn which thus obstructed their prosperity, passed into the pockets of the land-owners, without conferring an atom of advantage on either the farmer or the labourer.

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The meeting was adjourned, to the great chagrin of the President, and when the members assembled a week later, Cobden drew from his pocket a draft petition which he and his allies had prepared in the interval, and which after a discussion of many hours was adopted by an almost unanimous vote. The preamble laid all the stress on the alleged facts of foreign competition, in words which never fail to be heard in times of bad trade. It recited how the existing laws prevented the British manufacturer from exchanging the produce of his labour for the corn of other countries, and so enabled his foreign rivals to purchase

1839. ÆT. 35. their food at one half of the price at which it was sold in the English market; and finally the prayer of the petition called for the repeal of all laws relating to the importation of foreign corn and other foreign articles of subsistence, and implored the House to carry out to the fullest extent, both as affects manufactures and agriculture, the true and peaceful principles of free-trade.

In the following month, January, 1839, the Anti-Corn-Law Association showed that it was in earnest in the intention to agitate, by proceeding to raise a subscription of an effective sum of money. Cobden threw out one of those expressions which catch men's minds in moments when they are already ripe for action. "Let us," he said, "invest part of our property, in order to save the rest from confiscation." Within a month six thousand pounds had been raised, the first instalment of many scores of thousands still to come. A great banquet was given to some of the parliamentary supporters of Free Trade; more money was subscribed, convictions became clearer, and purpose waxed more resolute. On the day after the banquet, at a meeting of delegates from other towns, Cobden brought forward a scheme for united action among the various associations throughout the country. This was the germ of what ultimately became the League. It is worth noticing that more than four years before this, he had in his first pamphlet sketched in a general form the outlines of the course eventually followed by the League,—so fertile was his mind in practical methods of enlightening opinion, even without the stimulation of a company of sympathetic agitators. There he had asked how it was that so little progress had been made in the study of which Adam Smith was the great luminary, and why, while there were Banksian, Linnæan, Hunterian societies, there was no Smithian society, for the purpose of disseminating a more just knowledge of the

principles of trade. Such a society might enter into correspondence with similar bodies abroad, and so help to amend the restrictive policy of foreign governments, while at home prizes might be offered for the best essays on the corn question, and lecturers might be sent to enlighten the agriculturalists, and to invite discussion upon a subject which, while so difficult, was yet of such paramount interest to them and to the rest of the country.[3] The hour for the partial application of these very ideas had now come. Before the month of January, the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association was completely organized, and its programme laid before the public. The object was declared to be to obtain by all legal and constitutional means, such as the formation of local associations, the delivery of lectures, the distribution of tracts, and the presentation of petitions to parliament, the total and immediate repeal of the corn and provision laws. Cobden was appointed to be a member of the executive committee, and he continued in that office until the close of the agitation.

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In the February of 1839, as Cobden gaily reminded a great audience on the eve of victory six years later, three of them in a small room at Brown's hotel in Palace Yard were visited by a nobleman who had taken an active part in advocating a modification of the corn laws, but who could not bring himself to the point of total repeal. He asked what had brought them to town, and what it was that they wanted. They had come, they said, to seek the total and immediate repeal of the corn laws. With an emphatic shake of the head, he answered, "You will overturn the monarchy as soon as you will accomplish that."[4] For the moment it appeared as if this were really true. Mr. Villiers moved in the House of Commons (Feb. 18), that a

[3] Cobden's *Political Writings*, i. 32.
[4] Cobden's Speeches, i. 345.

1839. number of petitions against the corn laws should be
ÆT. 35. referred to a Committee of the whole House. The motion was negatived without a division. The next day he moved that certain members of the Manchester Association should be heard at the bar, in support of the allegations of a petition which they had presented three days before. Though this was a Whig parliament, or because it was a Whig parliament, the motion was thrown out by a majority of more than two to one in a House of more than five hundred members.

We cease to be amazed at this deliberate rejection of information from some of the weightiest men in the kingdom, at one of the most critical moments in the history of the kingdom, when we recall the fact that notwithstanding the pretended reform of parliament in 1832, four-fifths of the members of the House of Commons belonged to the old landed interests. The bewilderment of the government was shown by the fact that Lord John Russell and Lord Palmerston went into the lobby with the Protectionists, while the President of the Board of Trade followed Mr. Villiers. Yet Lord John had declared a short time before, that he admitted the duties on corn as then levied to be untenable. The whole incident is one of the most striking illustrations on record of one of the worst characteristics of parliamentary government, its sluggishness in facing questions on their merits. In this instance, the majority found before long that behind the industrial facts which they were too selfish and indolent to desire to hear, were political forces which they and their leader together were powerless to resist.

A few days later (March 12) Mr. Villiers brought forward his annual motion, that the house should resolve itself into committee to take into consideration the act regulating the importation of foreign corn. Across Palace Yard were assembled delegates from the thirty-six principal towns in

the kingdom, to enforce a prayer that had been urged by half a million of petitioners. But the motion, after a debate which extended over five nights, received only one hundred and ninety-seven votes out of a House of five hundred and forty-one. The delegates returned to their homes with the conviction that they had still a prolonged struggle before them. In the picturesque phrase of a contemporary writer, their departure was like the break-up of a Mahratta camp; it did not mean that the war was over, but only that attack would be renewed from another quarter. Some of them were inclined to despond, but the greater part almost instantly came round to the energetic mind of Cobden. He recalled the delegates to the fact that in spite of the House over the way, they represented three millions of the people. He compared the alliance of the great towns of England to the League of the Hanse Towns of Germany. That League had turned the castles which crowned the rocks along the Rhine, the Danube, and the Elbe into dismantled memorials of the past, and the new league would not fail in dismantling the legislative stronghold of the new feudal oppressors in England. No time was lost in strengthening their organization by drawing isolated societies to an effective centre. Measures were speedily taken (March) for the formation of a permanent union, to be called the Anti-Corn-Law League, to be composed of all the towns and districts that were represented in the delegation, and of as many others as might be induced to form local associations and federate them with the League. The executive committee of the old Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association was transformed into the council of the new Anti-Corn-Law League. With the same view of securing unity of action, the central offices were established in Manchester, whence from this time forward the national movement was directed.

The impatience of the free-traders had been irritated,

1839. Æt. 35. rather than soothed, by a speech of two hours in length from the great leader of the Conservative opposition, in which he carefully abstained from committing himself to any opinion on the principle at issue. He devised elaborate trains of hypothetical reasoning; he demolished imaginary cases; he dwelt on the irreconcilable contradictions among the best economists. But there was not a single sentence in the whole of Sir Robert Peel's speech, that could be taken to tie his hands in dealing with the corn laws, while on the contrary there was one sentence which to any one who should have accustomed himself to study the workings of that strong but furtive intellect, might have revealed that the great organ and chief of the landowners was not far removed from the Manchester manufacturer. He had at least placed himself in the mental attitude which made him accessible to their arguments. "I have no hesitation in saying,"—so Sir Robert Peel told the house—"that unless the existence of the corn law can be shown to be consistent, not only with the prosperity of agriculture and the maintenance of the landlord's interest, but also with the protection and the maintenance of the general interests of the country, and especially with the improvement of the condition of the labouring class, the corn law is practically at an end."[1]

Although such a position was rational and political, as compared with the talk of those who could not get beyond the argument that the proprietors of the soil had a right to do as they pleased with their own, still there remained a long road to travel before Peel could be regarded as a probable auxiliary. The repealers felt that they must depend upon their own efforts, without reference either to Sir Robert or Lord John. They had started a little organ of their own in the press in April; and the *Anti-Corn-Law Circular* used language which was not at all too strong for

[1] March 18, 1839.

the taste of most of them, when it cried out that all political factions were equally dishonest and profligate; that the repealers at any rate would not suffer their great question to be made a mere official hobby-horse; that they would pursue an undeviating course of strenuous protest to the nation at large, knowing well that repeal would never be granted by either the one or the other faction of political pettifoggers by which the kingdom was alternately cursed. If they could only get the honest, simple-hearted, and intelligent portion of the people to see the justice and the necessity of their cause, then they would not be long before they dragged both sections of the state quacks at their chariot wheels, each striving to outbid the other in tenders of service and offers of concession.*

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In less violent tones, Cobden kept insisting on the same point, after the rebuffs of the year had shown them that the battle would be long, and that its issues went too deep into the social system to suit the aims of traditional parties, for the traditional parties in England were of their very essence superficial and personal. Towards the end of 1839, Dr. Bowring came to Manchester to report on what he had found on the subject of trade with England during a recent official visit to the countries of the German Customs Union. His points were that in consequence of the English obstruction to the import of grain and timber, capital in Germany was being diverted to manufactures; that the German agriculturists were naturally eager for the removal of the protective duties on manufactures, which they could purchase more cheaply from England; but that they were met by the argument that England would never reciprocate by opening a free market for return purchases of grain, as her landlords and agriculturists were far too mighty to be overthrown or even shaken. Cobden, with his usual high

* December 10, 1839.

ÆT. 35. confidence of spirit, replied to this by asking how every social change and every religious change had been accomplished otherwise than by an appeal to public opinion. How, he exclaimed, had they secured the penny postage, which happened to have come into force on the very day of the meeting? Not by sitting still and quietly wishing for it, but by a number of men stepping out, spending their money, giving their time, agitating the community. And in the same way, how could they think that the corn laws would be repealed by sitting still at home, and lamenting over their evils? He appealed to them, not as Whigs, Tories, or Radicals, but as men with a sense not more of commercial interest, than of unmistakable national duty.

We have to remember that at this date the admission of Catholics to Parliament was not so remote, that men had forgotten the means by which that triumph of justice and tolerance had been achieved. Catholic emancipation was only ten years old, and it was present to the mind of every politician who wanted to have anything done, that this great measure had been carried by the incessant activity of O'Connell and the Catholic Association. That was a memorable example that the prejudice of the governing classes was to be most effectually overcome by the agitation of a powerful outside confederacy. No two men were ever much more unlike than Cobden and O'Connell, but Cobden had been a subscriber to the great agitator's Rent, and we may be sure that the Irish example was not lost on the leaders of the association against the corn laws. In truth here was the vital change that had been finally effected in our system by the Reform Act. Schemes of political improvement were henceforth to spring up outside of Parliament, instead of in the creative mind of the parliamentary leader; and official statesmanship has ever since consisted less in working out principles, than in measuring the force and

direction of the popular gale. It is thus the non-official statesman who, by concentrating the currents of common sentiment or opinion, really shapes the policy which the official chiefs accept from his hands. 1839. ÆT. 35.

The first year's campaign convinced the repealers that agitation is not always such smooth work as it had been in Ireland. They learnt how hardly an old class interest dies. They had begun the work of propagandism by sending out a small band, which afterwards became a large one, of economic missionaries. In Scotland the new gospel found a temperate hearing and much acceptance, but in England the lecturers were not many days in discovering at what peril they had undertaken to assault the prejudice and selfishness of a territorial aristocracy, and the brutality or cowardice of their hangers-on. Though there were many districts where nobody interfered with them, there were many others where neither law nor equity gave them protection. At Arundel the mayor refused the use of the town hall, on the ground that the lecture would make the labourers discontented; and the landlord refused the use of his large room, on the ground that if he granted it, he should lose his customers. A landowning farmer went further, and offered a bushel of wheat to anybody who would throw the lecturer into the river. At Petersfield, a paltry little borough in Hampshire, almost in sight of Cobden's birthplace, either spite or the timidity of political bondage went so far, that when the lecturer returned, after his harangue in the market-place, to the Dolphin, Boar, or Lion, where he had taken his tea and ordered his bed, the landlord and landlady peremptorily desired him to leave their house. In the eastern counties, again, they were usually well received by the common people, but vexed and harassed by the authorities. At Louth they were allowed to deliver their address in the town hall one night, but as the lecturer had the fortune

1839. Æt. 35. to discomfit a local magnate in the discussion which followed, the permission which had been given to use the hall on the next night was arbitrarily withdrawn, and the lecturers were driven to say what they had come to say from a gig in the market-place. Nor was this the end of the adventure. As they were about to leave the town, they were served with a warrant for causing an obstruction in a thoroughfare; they were brought before the very magnate over whom they had won so fatal a victory, and by him punished with a fine. At Stamford they were warned that the mob would tear them to pieces; but they protected themselves with a body-guard, and the mob was discovered to be less hostile than a small band of people who ought to have deserved the name of respectable. At Huntingdon the town clerk was the leader in provoking an outrageous disturbance, which forced the lecturer to give up the ground. In the Duke of Newcastle's country, at Newark and at Retford, there was not an innkeeper who dared to let the lecturer a room; and at Worksop, not only could the lecturer not find a room, nor a printer who should dare to print a placard, but he was assaulted by hired bullies in the street. It was reserved for a seat of learning to show that no brutality can equal that which is engendered of the union of the violent inherited prejudice of the educated classes, with the high spirits of youth. No creature is a more unbridled ruffian than the ruffian undergraduate can be, and at Cambridge the peaceful arguments of the lecturer were interrupted by a destructive and sanguinary riot. The local newspaper afterwards piously congratulated the furious gownsmen on having done their duty as "the friends of good government, and the upholders of the religious institutions of the country."[7]

It is only when people want to get something done that

[7] May 14, 1839.

all the odd perversities of the human mind spread themselves out in panoramic fulness. A long campaign of reckless and virulent calumny was at once opened in the party organs. One London newspaper described the worst members of the Association as unprincipled schemers, and the best as self-conceited socialists. Another declared with authority that it was composed in equal parts of commercial swindlers and political swindlers. A third with edifying unction denounced their sentiments as subversive of all moral right and order, their organization as a disloyal faction, and their speakers as revolutionary emissaries, whom all peaceable and well-disposed persons ought to assist the authorities in peremptorily putting down. The *Morning Post*, the journal of London idleness, hailed the Manchester workers in a style that would have been grotesque enough, if only it had not represented the serious thought of many of the most important people in the dominant class. "The manufacturing people exclaim, 'Why should we not be permitted to exchange the produce of our industry for the greatest quantity of food which that industry will anywhere command?' To which we answer, why not, indeed? Who hinders you? Take your manufactures away with you by all means, and exchange them anywhere you will from Tobolsk to Timbuctoo. If nothing will serve you but to eat foreign corn, away with you, you and your goods, and let us never see you more!" This was a quarter from which the language of simpletons was to be expected, but as the repealers had a thousand opportunities of discovering within the next seven years, the language of simpletons has many dialects. One of the lowest perversions of the right sense of place and proportion in things, was reached by those who cried out angrily that the great and decisive test for candidates at the next general election would not be corn laws or anti-corn-laws, but "How are your views on the Sabbath question?" The

1839. Chartists, of whom we shall say something in another
Æт. 35. chapter, began a long course of violent hostility by trying at the very outset of the agitation to break up a meeting at Leeds, insisting that the movement was a cheat put on the work-people of the country by cunning and rapacious employers. Even in places where so much strong political intelligence existed as at Birmingham, members of the town council of the borough were found to talk about "the interested movements of the Whig corn law intriguers," and to urge that the discussion of the corn laws was merely a Whig device to embarrass the patriotic champions of parliamentary reform.[1] Of all this the Leaguers heard much more, and from more troublesome people, in the years to come.

Meanwhile the information which their lecturers brought back to head-quarters at Manchester, as to the state of some of the rural districts, inspired the leaders of the agitation with new zeal, and a stronger conviction of the importance of their cause. In Devonshire they found that the wages of the labourers were from seven to nine shillings a week; that they seldom saw meat or tasted milk; and that their chief food was a compost of ground barley and potatoes. It was little wonder that in a county where such was the condition of labour, the lecturer was privately asked by poor men at the roadside if he could tell them where the fighting was to be. Nor need we doubt that he was speaking the simple truth when he reported that, though ignorant of Chartism as a political question, the great mass of the population of Devon were just as ready for pikes and pistols, as the most excitable people of the factory towns. In Somersetshire the budget of a labourer, his wife, and five children under ten years of age, was as follows. Half a bushel of wheat cost four shillings; for grinding, baking, and barm, sixpence; firing,

[1] Bunce's *History of the Corporation of Birmingham*, i. 166-7.

sixpence; rent, eighteen pence; leaving, out of the total earnings of seven shillings, a balance of sixpence, out of which to provide the family with clothing, potatoes, and all the other necessaries and luxuries of human existence. 1839. ÆT. 35.

With facts like these before them, the leaguers read with mockery the idyllic fustian in which even the ablest men of the landlord party complacently indulged their feeling for the picturesque. Sir James Graham, in resisting Mr. Villiers's motion this year, spoke of the breezy call of incense-breathing morn, the neat thatched cottage, the blooming garden, the cheerful village green. The repeal of the corn laws would lead to a great migration from all this loveliness to the noisy alley, and the "sad sound of the factory bell." "Tell not to me any more," the orator called out in a foolish ecstasy, "of the cruelties of the conveyance of the Poles to the wintry wastes of Siberia; talk not to me of the transportation of the Hill Coolies from Coromandel to the Mauritius; a change is contemplating by some members of this House, far more cruel, far more heart-rending in the bosom of our native land."[9] If this nonsense was the vein of so able a man as Graham, we may infer the depths of prejudice and fallacy down into which Cobden and his allies had to follow less sensible people. And the struggle had hardly begun. The landlords were not yet awakened into consciousness that this time the Manchester men were in earnest, and resolutely intended to raise the country upon them. They still believed that the corn laws were as safe as the monarchy; and many months passed before they realized that the little group who now met several times in each week in a dingy room on an upper floor at Newall's Buildings in Market Street in Manchester, were not to be daunted either by bad divisions in Parliament,

[9] March 15, 1839.

1839. or bad language in the newspapers, because they had become
ÆT. 35. fired by the conviction that what they were fighting against was not merely a fiscal blunder, but a national iniquity.

Cobden lived at this time, along with his brothers and sisters, in a large house in Quay Street, which he had bought very shortly after settling in Manchester, and which was known to the next generation as Owens College. His business was in a flourishing condition, and it would have saved him from many a day of misery if he could have been content to leave it as it was. It was from no selfish or personal motive that he now proceeded to make a change in the arrangements. The reader has already seen how at the beginning of his career Cobden affectionately insisted with his brother, "that you will henceforth consider yourself as by right my associate in all the favours of fortune." And it was in the interest of Frederick Cobden and his two younger brothers that he now broke up the existing partnership. The firm had previously consisted of five members, carrying on business under three titles, one at the warehouse in Watling Street in London; the second at the print works at Sabden; the third, specifically known as Richard Cobden and Company, at Manchester and Crosse Hall, near Chorley in Lancashire. Frederick Cobden was not a member of any of these allied firms, and there seems to have been no willingness to make room for him. At the end of July, 1839, Cobden withdrew from his old partners. He left them to carry on the London warehouse and the Sabden print works on their own account. He then proceeded himself to form a new partnership with Frederick Cobden, to carry on the Manchester warehouse and the print works at Crosse Hall. This was the arrangement of Cobden's business during the six years of agitation against the Corn Laws.

Though his motive in making the change was the desire to raise the position of his elder brother at once, and to pave the way for his younger brother in the future, yet Cobden had no doubt convinced himself that the change was sound and prudent in itself. A less sanguine man would have found the altered conditions formidable. In the business which he left, though he did not find himself in entire sympathy with one of the London partners, all had been managed with the greatest exactitude, and there had been abundance of capital in proportion to the extent of the business. At Crosse Hall he found himself much less favourably placed. He was thrown entirely on his own unaided resources, for his letters show that Frederick Cobden, with all his excellent qualities, yet was one of the men who mistake feverish anxiety for business-like caution, and then suppose that they repair the errors of timidity by moments of hurried action. Instead of coming into a factory, like the works at Sabden, perfectly organized and superintended by an experienced eye, Cobden had now to find a new staff, and what was perhaps at least as arduous, he had to find new capital, and to earn interest as well as profit from its working.

He had, moreover, so early as 1835 made speculative purchases of land in various quarters of Manchester, where his too cheerful vision discovered a measureless demand for houses, shops, and factories, as soon as ever the corn duty should be repealed, and the springs of industrial enterprise set free. For five and twenty years waste spaces between Victoria Park and Rusholme, in Quay Street, and Oxford Street, bore melancholy testimony to a miscalculation; and for five and twenty years Cobden paid a thousand pounds a year, in the shape of chief rent, for a property which thus brought him not a shilling of return. In spite of the grave drawbacks which I have named, it is not doubted by those who have the best means of knowing, that the new

1840. Æt. 36.

firm was for some time reasonably successful, and was even visited by gleams of genuine prosperity. But the undertaking was hardly launched, before its chief was drawn away from effective interest in it by a strong vocation which he could not resist, to be the leader of the great national cause of the time.

Meanwhile within a few months of the re-settlement of his business, he took another momentous step in marrying (May, 1840). His wife was Miss Catherine Anne Williams, a young Welsh lady, whose acquaintance he had made as a school-friend of one of his sisters. She is said by all who knew her to have been endowed with singular personal beauty, and with manners of perfect dignity and charm Whether in Cobden's case this union was preceded by much deliberation, we do not know; perhaps experience shows that the profoundest deliberation in choosing a wife is little better than the cleverness of people who boast of a scientific secret of winning in a lottery. Although marriage is usually so much the most important element in deciding whether a life shall be heaven or hell, it is that on which in any given instance it is least proper for a stranger to speak.

It would seem that to be the wife of a prominent public man is not always an easy lot. As Goethe's Leonora says of men and women :—

> Ihr strebt nach fernen Gütern,
> Und euer Streben muss gewaltsam seyn.
> Ihr wagt es, für die Ewigkeit zu handeln,
> Wenn wir ein einzig nah beschränktes Gut
> Auf dieser Erde nur besitzen möchten,
> Und wünschen dass es uns beständig bliebe.[1]

If the champion of great causes has to endure the loss of domestic companionship, he is at least compensated by

[1] "Ye strive for far-off goals, and strenuous your battle. For immortality to toil, do you aspire. But we one single narrow good, and that nigh to us, would fain possess upon this earth, and only ask that it should steadfast dwell."

patriotic satisfaction in the result; but unless the woman be of more than common strength of public zeal, the thousand lonely days and nights and all the swarm of undivided household cares may well put temper and spirits to a sharp strain. In the last year of Cobden's life, as he and Mrs. Cobden were coming up to London from their home in the country, Mrs. Cobden said to him,—"I sometimes think that, after all the good work that you have done, and in spite of fame and great position, it would have been better for us both if, after you and I married, we had gone to settle in the backwoods of Canada." And Cobden could only say, after looking for a moment or two with a gaze of mournful preoccupation through the window of the carriage, that he was not sure that what she said was not too true. But in 1840 evil days had not yet come, and as they took their summer wedding trip through France, Savoy, Switzerland, and Germany, Cobden had as good right as any mortal can ever have, to look forward to a future of material prosperity, domestic happiness, and honest service to his country.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CORN LAWS.

IT will perhaps not be inconvenient if I here pause in my narrative, to introduce a short parenthesis setting forth what actually were the nature and working of the Corn Laws at this time. Their destruction was the one finished triumph with which Cobden's name is associated. The wider doctrines which he tried to impress upon men still await the seal of general acceptance; but it is a tolerably safe prophecy that no English statesman will ever revive a tax upon bread.

Cobden was much too careful a student of the facts of his question to fall into the error of the declaimers on his own side, who assumed that none but the owners of the soil had ever claimed protection by law for their industry. In the first number of the little organ which was issued by the Association,[1] he wrote a paper on the modern history of the Corn Laws, which began by plainly admitting, what it would have been childish to deny, that down to 1820 manufacturers probably enjoyed as ample a share of legislative protection as the growers of corn. Huskisson's legislation from 1823 to 1825 reduced the tariff of duties upon almost every article of foreign manufacture. This stamped that date, in Cobden's words, as the era of a commercial revolution, more important in its effects upon society, and pregnant with

[1] April 16, 1839.

weightier consequences in the future, than many of those political revolutions which have commanded infinitely greater attention from historians. The duty on cotton goods was lowered from a figure ranging from between seventy-five and fifty per cent. down to ten per cent. Imported linens sometimes paid as much as one hundred and eighty per cent.; they were henceforth to be admitted at twenty-five. Paper had been prohibited; it was now allowed to come in on paying twice the amount levied as excise from the home manufacturer. The duty on a foreign manufacture in no case exceeded thirty per cent. The principle of this immense reform was that, if the article were not made either much better or at a much lower price abroad than at home, then such a duty would be ample for purposes of protection. If, on the contrary, the foreign article were either so much better or so much cheaper as to render thirty per cent. insufficient for purposes of protection, then, in the first place, a heavier duty would only put a premium on smuggling; and, secondly, said Huskisson, there is no wisdom in bolstering up a competition which this degree of protection will not sustain.

These enlightened opinions, and the measures which followed from them, were the first rays of dawn after the long night of confusion and mediocrity in which the Castlereaghs, Sidmouths, Bathursts, Vansittarts, had governed their unfortunate country. Even now political power was so distributed that, though the new school thus saw the better course, they dared not to venture too rapidly upon it. There was one mighty and imperious interest which, as the parliamentary system was then disposed, even Canning's courage shrank from offending. The Cabinet, which had radically modified a host of restrictive laws, was logically and politically bound to deal with the most important of them all—that which restrained the importation of food.

By the law of 1815 corn could be imported when wheat had risen to eighty shillings a quarter. By the law of 1822 this was improved to the extent of permitting importation when the price of wheat was seventy shillings a quarter. The landlords vowed that this was the lowest rate at which the British farmer could live, and not a few of them cried out for total prohibition. They had powerful allies in the cabinet, and even the Liberal wing in the Cabinet which was led by Canning, never dreamed of being able to push the landlords very hard. When pressed by a motion for extending to the case of grain the same principle which had just been so wisely glorified in the case of cotton, woollen, silk, linen, and glass, Huskisson resisted it on the too familiar ground that the motion was ill-timed. He did not deny that it would presently be necessary to revise the Corn Laws; and he added the important admission that several foreign countries were not only in distress, owing to our exclusion of their corn, but that in revenge they were proceeding to shut out our manufactures.[1]

Two years elapsed before the Ministry ventured to touch the burning subject. The new measure was not brought forward by Huskisson. It was officially given out as the reason for this that he was ill, but this was only one of the peculiar blinds that serve to open people's eyes. Everybody suspected that Huskisson's illness was in reality the chagrin of the good economist at a bad measure. It was Canning who, in the spring of 1827, introduced the new Corn Bill.[2] It proceeded on the plan of making the duty vary inversely with the price of the grain in the home market. When the price of wheat in the home market reached sixty shillings a quarter, foreign wheat was to pay on importation a duty of one pound. For every rise of a shilling in the home price the duty was to go down two shillings; for every fall of a

[1] April 28, 1825. [2] March 1, 1827.

shilling in the home price the duty was to go up two shillings. The increase and decrease in the duty was always to be double the fall and rise in the price. In other words, when the average price reached seventy shillings, wheat might be imported with a nominal duty of one shilling; on the other hand, when the average price fell to fifty shillings, the duty on foreign wheat would be forty shillings. 1827. ÆT. 28.

After the bill had passed the Commons, the Liverpool Ministry fell to pieces, and a season of odious intrigue was followed by the accession of Canning. The Corn Bill went up to the Lords in due course. The Duke of Wellington, though he had been a member of the Liverpool cabinet by which the bill had been sanctioned, now moved an amendment on it, and the new Ministry was defeated. Canning and Huskisson let the bill drop. The event which so speedily followed is one of the tragic pages in the history of English statesmen. Canning died a few weeks after the close of the session; Lord Goderich's abortive Ministry flickered into existence for four or five months, when it flickered out again; and before the end of the year the Duke of Wellington was prime minister. The great soldier was a narrow and sightless statesman, and with his accession to power all the worse impulses of the privileged classes acquired new confidence and intensity. In every sphere the men of exclusion and restriction breathed more freely.

The Duke introduced a new Corn Bill. This bad measure accepted Canning's principle, if we may give the name of principle to an empirical device; but it carried the principle further in the wrong direction. In the bill of 1827, the starting-point had been the exaction of a twenty shilling duty, when the home price was sixty shillings the quarter. According to the bill of 1828, when the price in the home market was sixty-four shillings, the duty was twenty three shillings and eightpence. The variations in the amount of

duty were not equal as in the previous bill, but went by leaps. Thus, when wheat was at sixty-nine shillings, the duty was sixteen and eightpence; and when the home price rose to seventy three, then the duty fell to the nominal rate of a shilling. This was the Corn Law which Cobden and his friends rose up to overthrow.[4]

So far back as 1815, when that important measure had been passed restraining the introduction of wheat for home consumption unless the average price had reached eighty shillings for the quarter, the mischief of such legislation had been understood and described in Parliament. In the House of Lords the dissentients from the measure, only ten in number, had signed a protest, drawn up, as it has always been believed, by that independent and hard-headed statesman, Lord Grenville. The grounds of dissent were these: That all new restraints on commerce are bad in principle; that such restraints are especially bad when they affect the food of the people; that the results would not conduce to plenty, cheapness, or steadiness of price; that such a measure levied a tax on the consumer, in order to give a bounty to the grower of corn. This was a just and unanswerable series of objections. Within six years (1821) a parliamentary committee was appointed to inquire into agricultural depression.

If we turn to the effect of our regulations upon foreign countries, there too they brought nothing but calamity. When grain rose to a starvation price in England, we entered the foreign markets; the influx of our gold disturbed their exchanges, embarrassed their merchants, and engendered all the mischief of speculation and gambling. As it was put by some speaker of the day, the question was—"Are you to receive food from a foreign country

[4] 9 Geo. IV., c. 60.

quietly, reasonably, in payment for the manufactures which you send to them? Or are you to go to them only in the moment of perturbation, of anxiety, of starvation, and say, Now we must have food at any rate, and we will pay any price, though the very foundations of your society should be shaken by the transaction."

1828. ÆT. 24.

There was no essential bond between the maintenance of agricultural protection and Conservative policy. Burke, the most magnificent genius that the Conservative spirit has ever attracted, was one of the earliest assailants of legislative interference in the corn trade, and the important Corn Act of 1773 was inspired by his maxims.[5] There is no such thing, Burke said, as the landed interest separate from the trading interest; and he who separates the interest of the consumer from the interest of the grower, starves the country.[6] Five and twenty years after this, in a luminous tract often praised by Cobden, he again attacked a new form of the futile and mischievous system of dealing with agriculture as if it were different from any other branch of commerce, and denounced tampering with the trade in provisions as of all things the most dangerous.[7] Although, however, Conservative policy was not necessarily bound up with protection, the Tory party were committed to it by all the ties of personal interest.

The Whigs ruled the country, save for a few months, for eleven years from 1830 to 1841. In Lord Melbourne's Cabinet, in 1839, the Corn Laws were, as we have already

[5] This was the most liberal piece of legislation until the Act of Repeal in 1846. When the home price was at or above 48s., imported wheat paid a nominal duty of 6d., and the bounty on exportation ceased when the home price was 44s. "The Act of 1773 should not have been altered," says McCulloch, "unless to give greater freedom to the trade."

[6] Feb. 28, 1771.

[7] *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity.* 1795.

1841. seen, an open question.[a] But two years later the financial
ÆT. 37. position of the country had become so serious, and the credit and forces of the party had fallen so low, that it became necessary to enter upon a more decisive course. The expenditure had undergone a progressive increase, amounting in six years to four millions sterling on the annual estimates for the military and naval services alone, a rise of more than thirty per cent. For each of the last four years there had been a serious deficiency of income. In 1840 it was a million and a half. For 1841 it was given out as upwards of one million, eight hundred and fifty thousand. Nor was this the result merely of an absence of fiscal skill in the government of the day. It was the sign, confirmed by the obstinate depression of trade and the sufferings of the population, of an industrial and commercial stagnation which could only be dealt with by an economic revolution.

Besides such considerations as these, there were the considerations of party strength. Macaulay's biographer quotes a significant passage from his diary. "The cry for free trade in corn," he wrote in 1839, and Macaulay was in the Cabinet, "seems to be very formidable. If the Ministers play their game well, they may now either triumph completely, or retire with honour. They have excellent cards, if they know how to use them."[b] Unluckily for themselves, they did not know how to use them; and everybody was quite aware that their conversion towards Free Trade was not the result of conviction, but was only the last device of a foundering party.

In 1840 a committee on import duties had sat, and produced a striking and remarkable report, recommending an abandonment of the illiberal and exclusive policy of the past, and a radical simplification of the tariff by substituting for a multitude of duties, imposts on a small number of the

[a] *Above*, pp. 143 and 148. [b] Trevelyan's *Life*, ii. 87.

most productive articles, the amount of the impost being calculated with a view to the greatest consumption. This was in truth the base of Peel's great reform of 1842. But Lord Melbourne's Cabinet had no member of sufficient grasp and audacity in finance to accept boldly and comprehensively, as Peel afterwards did, the maxim that reduction of duties is one way to increase of revenue. The Whig government made the experiment timidly, and they met the common fate of those who take a great principle with half-heartedness and mistrust. They picked it up for want of a better. "I cannot conceive," said Peel, "a more lamentable position than that of a Chancellor of the Exchequer, seated on an empty chest, by the side of bottomless deficiencies, fishing for a budget." 1841. ÆT. 37.

The proposals which the government had hit upon were these. They returned to the general principle of the budget which Lord Althorp had brought forward at the beginning of the Whig reign (1831)—the boldest budget, as it has justly been called, since the days of Pitt.[1] The main object of the commutation of duties, Lord Althorp had said, is the relief of the lower classes. "The best way of relieving them is by giving them employment; and this can only be secured by reducing the taxes which most interfere with manufacturing industry." Among other devices for carrying this principle into practice, Lord Althorp had proposed to regulate the timber duties.[2] He had failed to carry that measure against Peel's opposition, which was aided by a general opinion that the budget was unsound—an opinion mainly due to the startling proposal to levy a tax of a half per cent. on transfers of funded property. Lord Althorp's successor now came back to some of his ideas. The ques-

[1] Walpole's *History of England*, ii. 634.

[2] The 10s. duty on Canadian timber was to be raised to 20s., and the 55s. duty on Norwegian and other European timber lowered to 20s.

1841. tion for the Cabinet to decide, as Lord John Russell describes
ÆT. 37. the situation, "was whether they would lower duties of a protective character on a great number of small articles, or whether they would attack the giant monopolies of sugar, of timber, and of corn." They adopted the latter course, but in the spirit of Huskisson, and not of Cobden. They preferred an ineffectual approach to Free Trade, to a complete repeal of protective duties. To touch the differential duties on sugar was to attack one at least of the strongest protective interests in Parliament, and every other protected interest moved in sympathetic agitation. The more sanguine of the ministers hoped to beat them by conciliating the manufacturing interest. This they expected to reach through the Corn Laws. Lord John Russell moved (May 7) to abolish the sliding scale of 1828, and to establish instead a fixed eight-shilling duty upon wheat.[3] The battle turned upon the comparative merits of Free Trade and Protective duties, and in the special question of the Corn Laws upon the comparative merits of a graduated and a fixed duty.

In a debate on a vote of confidence in 1840, Peel seemed to have advanced a step from the position which had irritated the Leaguers in 1839. He still considered a liberal protection to domestic agriculture indispensable, both in the special interests of agriculture, and the general interests of the community. He did not tie himself to the details of the existing law; but he maintained that a graduated duty, varying inversely with the price of corn, was far preferable to a fixed duty. He objected to a fixed duty on two grounds: first, on account of the great difficulty of determining the proper amount of it on any satisfactory data; secondly, and chiefly, because he foresaw that it would be impossible to maintain that fixed duty under a very high

[3] 5s. on rye; 4s. 6d. on barley; 3s. 4d. on oats.

price of corn, and that if it were once withdrawn, there would be extreme difficulty in re-imposing it. 1841. ÆT. 37.

He now, in 1841, repeated what he had said the previous year. "Notwithstanding the formidable combination which has been formed against the Corn Laws," he said, "notwithstanding the declarations that either the total repeal or the substitution of a fixed duty for the present scale, is the inevitable result of the agitation now going forward, I do not hesitate to avow my adherence to the opinion which I expressed last year, and now again declare, that my preference is decidedly in favour of a graduated scale rather than any fixed duty."

Lord Melbourne had foreseen the fate of his Chancellor's budget. He was shrewd enough to be sure that a half-measure could never raise up so many friends among the manufacturers as to outweigh the united force of the agricultural and colonial interests.[4] In fact, no friends were raised up. No great body was conciliated, nor attracted, nor even touched with friendly interest; and the chief reason for this stubborn apathy was, as Sir Robert Peel said, that nobody believed that the proposals of Ministers sprang from their spontaneous will, or that they had been adopted in consequence of the deliberate convictions of those who brought them forward. The conversion was too rapid. Only two years had gone since the Prime Minister had declared in his place that the repeal of the Corn Laws would be the most insane proposition that ever entered a human head. Lord Palmerston made a fine speech against the system of protective duties; but men remembered that, two years before, he had voted against Mr. Villiers's motion to hear the members of the Manchester Association at the bar of the House. And the motives of so speedy a change were too plain.

[4] Torrens's *Life of Melbourne*, ii. 358.

1841. ÆT. 37. The first division as to the new budget was taken upon the sugar duties; the Ministers found themselves in a minority of thirty-six. They still held on, and instead of either resigning or dissolving immediately, astonished parliament and the country by an announcement that they would go on with the old sugar duties, and would bring forward the question of the Corn Laws in the course of two or three weeks. Sir Robert Peel declined to give them the chance, brought forward a vote of want of confidence, and carried it by a majority of one.

The Ministers could not believe that the House of Commons represented the wishes of the country, and to the country they now appealed.

CHAPTER VIII.

COBDEN ENTERS PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION.

THE dissolution of Parliament took place at Midsummer. 1841.
The League went actively into the campaign, though not ÆT. 37.
with that inflexibility in electoral policy which afterwards marked their operations. They had to face the question which always perplexes the thorough-going advocates of any political principle, when they come to deal with political practice. In all such cases a section springs up which is prepared to go half way. The Government had given to this section a cry. They were not prepared for total and immediate repeal, but they would go for a moderate fixed duty. The proposal of a fixed duty furnished the compromisers with a comfortable halting-place. They could thus claim to be Free Traders, without being suspected of the deadly sin of being extreme. The Council of the League were called upon to settle the proper attitude towards the men of the middle course. Were they to offer a fanatical resistance to the men of the middle party, thus shocking timid but reasonable sympathizers, and forfeiting their own character for prudence and discretion, qualities as essential to success as sincerity itself? They answered this question as might have been expected at that time. For themselves, they held to their own demand for the entire liberation of the provision trade. Wherever there was a constituency ripe for carrying a candidate of this colour, every exertion

1841. Æt. 37. was to be made for securing a good candidate and ensuring his return. Where friends of the League were in a constituency not yet enlightened enough to return a candidate of League principles, then they ought to vote for a candidate who would support the measure of the Government. Considering both the moderate strength of the League at that time, and the state of the question in men's minds, it seems that this was the natural and judicious course.

Some of the more dogged, however, among members of the League were hurt by what they took for a Laodicean halting between two opinions, and talked of withdrawing or lessening their subscriptions. Subscriptions are always a very sensitive point in agitations; and Cobden found it worth while, after the elections were over, to write a letter to one of the more important of the protesters, explaining the principle on which the League had acted. "With reference to your complaint," he says, "that the League did not oppose the measure of the Government, I must remind you that the real governing power, the landed and other monopolists, held fast by the old law; *they* never attempted to force the fixed duty upon us. We regarded the Government proposal, not as an offer from a party strong enough to concede anything, but merely as a step in advance taken by a portion of the aristocracy. It was not our business to attack them, whilst another party, more powerful than the Government and the people, were resolutely opposed to any concession. To my humble apprehension, it is as unwise as unjust in any kind of political warfare to assail those who are disposed to co-operate, however slightly, in the attempt to overthrow a formidable and uncompromising enemy."

In the elections in the north of England the repealers were successful against both Whigs and Tories, and among those who succeeded was Cobden himself. "I

am afraid," he wrote to his brother, "you will be vexed on landing in England to find me Member for Stockport. I had fully, as you know, determined not to go to Parliament. I stood out. The Bolton and Stockport folks both got requisitions to me insuring my return. I declined. It was then that the Stockport people put the screw upon me, by a large deputation confessing their inability to agree amongst themselves upon any other man who could turn out the Major. They offered me *carte blanche* as to my attendance in London, and as to the time of my retaining the seat. I was over-persuaded by my Manchester partisans and have yielded, and the election is secure. You must not vex yourself, for I am quite resolved that it shall not be the cause of imposing either additional expense on my mode of living, or any increased call upon my time for public objects. I did not dream of this, as you very well know."[1] 1841. ÆT. 37.

"I have a right to expect other men of business," he wrote to a manufacturer at Warrington, urging a contest in that borough, "for I am doing it myself much against my wish. I offered to give a hundred pounds towards the expenses of another candidate in my stead for Stockport, and to canvass for him for a week; and it was only when the electors declared that they could not agree to another, and would not be able to oust the bread-taxers without me, that I consented to stand."

The League, in fact, put a strong pressure upon him, and we may perhaps believe that Cobden's resistance to the urgency of his political friends was not very stubborn. He must have felt by invincible instinct that only through a seat in Parliament could he secure an effective hearing for his arguments. It is uncertain whether the opinion of the constituency which had rejected him in 1837, had really

[1] *To F. Cobden*, June 16, 1841.

1841. been excited by the Free Trade discussion, or whether the
ÆT. 37. motives of the voters were merely personal. Shrewd electioneerers have a maxim that a candidate is sure to win any given seat in time, if he is only tenacious enough. Cobden was returned by a triumphant majority. "The Stockport affair," he wrote, "was carried with unexpected éclat. We drubbed the Major so soundly that at one o'clock he resigned. We could have beaten him easily by two to one. My committee worked to admiration. Two hundred electors were up all the night previous to polling, including the mill-owners . . . . who neither changed their clothes nor closed their eyes for thirty-six hours. These men were against me at the former election. Upon the whole the elections will give Peel a majority of thirty or forty. So much the better. We shall do something in opposition."[1]

It proved that Sir Robert Peel had a majority, not of thirty or forty, but of more than ninety. Lord Melbourne, however, did not anticipate the practice of our own day by resigning before the meeting of the hostile Parliament. The Ministers put into the Queen's speech as good an account as they could of their policy, and awaited their fate. Cobden took his seat on the first day of the session. "Yesterday," he says, "I went down to the House to be sworn to renounce the Pope and the Pretender. Then I went into the Treasury, and heard Lord John deliver his last dying speech and confession to his parliamentary minority. He gave us the substance of the Queen's speech, which is in the *Chronicle* to-day. I cannot learn what the Tories intend to do to-night, but I suppose they will try to avoid committing themselves against the Free Trade measures. It is allowed on all sides that they fear discussion as they do death. It is reported that the old Duke advises his party not to force themselves on the Queen, but to let the Whigs go on till the

[1] *To F. Cobden*, July 3, 1841.

reins fairly drop out of their hands. The Queen seems to be more violently opposed than ever to the Tories."[3] 1841. Ær. 37.

The Queen had no choice. An amendment was moved upon the address in both Houses, and carried in the Commons by the irresistible majority of ninety-one. The vote was taken at five in the morning (August 28), and in the afternoon of the same day, Lord Melbourne went down to Windsor to resign his post. Within a few days that great administration was formed which contained not only able Tories like Lord Lyndhurst, but able seceders from the Whigs like Lord Stanley and Sir James Graham; which commanded an immense majority in both Houses; which was led by a chief of consummate sagacity; and which was at last, five years afterwards, slowly broken to pieces by the work of Cobden and the League.

Cobden made his maiden speech in the debate which preceded this great official revolution. "I was induced," he writes to his brother, "to speak last night at about nine o'clock. We thought the debate would have been brought to a close. The Tories were doggedly resolved from the first not to enter upon any discussion of the main question, and the discussion, if it could be called one, went on as flat as possible. My speech had one good effect. I called up a booby who let fly at the manufacturers, very much to the chagrin, I suspect, of the leader of his party. It is now thought that the Tories must come out and discuss in self-defence the Free Trade question, and if not, they will be damaged by the arguments on the other side. All my friends say I did well. But I feel it very necessary to be cautious in speaking too much. I shall be an observer for some time."[4]

We now see that Cobden's maiden speech was much more than a success in the ordinary sense of attracting the atten-

[3] *To F. Cobden*, August 24, 1841. [4] *To F. Cobden*, August 26, 1841.

1841. Æt. 37. tion of that most difficult of all audiences. It sounded a new key, and startled men by an accent that was strange in the House of Commons. The thoughtful among them recognized the rare tone of reality, and the note of a man dealing with things and not words. He produced that singular and profound effect which is perceived in English deliberative assemblies, when a speaker leaves party recriminations, abstract argument, and commonplaces of sentiment, in order to inform his hearers of telling facts in the condition of the nation. Cobden reminded the House that it was the condition of the nation, and not the interests of a class, or the abstract doctrines of the economist, that cried for a relief which it was in the power of the legislature to bestow. This was the point of the speech. In spite of the strong wish of everybody on the side of the majority, and of many on the side of the minority, to keep the Corn Law out of the debate, Cobden insisted that the Corn Law was in reality the only matter which at that moment was worth debating at all. The family of a nobleman, he showed the House, paid to the bread tax about one halfpenny on every hundred pounds of income, while the effect of the tax on the family of the labouring man was not less than twenty per cent. A fact of this kind, as they said of Pericles's speeches, left a sting in the minds of his hearers. The results of the injustice were seen in the misery of the population. A great meeting of ministers of religion of all sects had been held in Manchester a few days before, and Cobden told the House something of the destitution throughout the country, to which these men had borne testimony.

"At that meeting," he said, "most important statements of facts were made relating to the condition of the labouring-classes. He would not trouble the House by reading those statements; but they showed that in every district of the

country . . . . the condition of the great body of her 1841.
Majesty's labouring population had deteriorated woefully ÆT. 37.
within the last ten years, and more especially within the last three years; and that, in proportion as the price of food increased, in the same proportion the comforts of the working-classes had diminished. One word with respect to the manner in which his allusion to this meeting was received. He did not come there to vindicate the conduct of these Christian men in having assembled in order to take this subject into consideration. The people who had to judge them were their own congregations. There were at that meeting members of the Established Church, of the Church of Rome, Independents, Baptists, members of the Church of Scotland and of the Secession Church, Methodists, and indeed ministers of every other denomination; and if he were disposed to impugn the character of those divines, he felt he should be casting a stigma and a reproach upon the great body of professing Christians in his country. He happened to be the only member of the House present at that meeting; and he might be allowed to state that when he heard the tales of misery there described; when he heard these ministers declare that members of their congregations were kept away from places of worship during the morning service, and only crept out under cover of the darkness of night; when they described others as unfit to receive spiritual consolation, because they were sunk so low in physical destitution; that the attendance at Sunday-schools was falling off; when he heard these and such-like statements; when he who believed that the Corn Law, the provision monopoly, was at the bottom of all that was endured, heard those statements, and from such authority, he must say that he rejoiced to see gentlemen of such character come forward, and like Nathan, when he addressed the owner of flocks and herds who had plundered the poor

1841. man of his only lamb, say unto the doer of injustice, whoever he might be: 'Thou art the man.' The people, through
ÆT. 37. their ministers, had protested against the Corn Laws. . . . . When they found so many ministers of religion, without any sectarian differences, joining heart and hand in a great cause, there could be no doubt of their earnestness. . . . . Englishmen had a respect for rank, for wealth—perhaps too much; they felt an attachment to the laws of their country; but there was another attribute in the minds of Englishmen—there was a permanent veneration for sacred things; and when their sympathy and respect and deference were enlisted in what they believed to be a sacred cause, you and yours [addressing the Protectionists] will vanish like chaff before the whirlwind."

One or two simpletons laughed at an appeal to evidence from such a source; but it was felt that, though they might jeer at the speaker as a Methodist parson, and look down upon him as a manufacturer, yet he represented a new force with which the old parties would one day have to deal. In the country his speech excited the deep interest of that great class, who are habitually repelled by the narrow passions and seeming insincerity of ordinary politics.

His friends in the north were delighted by the vigour and alacrity of their champion. With the sanguine assurance of all people who have convinced themselves of the goodness of their cause, and are very earnest in wishing to carry it, they were certain that Cobden's arguments must speedily convert Parliament and the Ministry. "It is pleasant," Cobden wrote to his brother, "to learn that my maiden effort has pleased our good friends. I have some letters from Manchester with congratulations. It is very pleasant, but I must be careful not to be carried off my legs. Stanley scowls and Peel smiles at me, both meaning mischief. There is no other man on the other side that I have heard, who is at all for-

midable. I observe there are a great many busy men of 1841.
our party who like to see their names in print, and who ÆT. 37.
therefore take up small matters continually; they are very little attended to by the House. With these men I shall not interfere, and they will all aid me in obtaining a fair hearing on my great question. We had a curious scene of jealousy and bickering to-day. Sharman Crawford brought on an amendment to the address without consulting anybody.[5] Roebuck, who is as wayward and impulsive as he is clever, walked out of the House with a tail of four or five, whilst hearty old Wallace of Greenock cried out, 'Who cares for you? who cares?' amidst the roars of the House. I can see that Roebuck will never do any good for our Free Trade party. He does not see the importance of our principle, and therefore cannot feel a proper interest in it. He is a good deal in communication with Brougham, who, by the way, sent word by Sturge to-day that he wants to see me. I find myself beset by cliques, but my abstemious and ruminating turn will make me entirely safe from all such intrigues and influences."[6]

"From what I can hear," he wrote a month later, "it appears that Peel has no plan in view of any kind, with respect to the corn question. The aristocracy and people are gaping at him, wondering what he is going to do, and his head will be at work with no higher ambition than to gull both parties. I am of opinion that there never was a better moment than at present for carrying the question out of doors. If there be determination enough in the minds of the people to make a vigorous demonstration

[5] When the House met to receive the Report on the Amended Address, Mr. Crawford proposed an amendment, to the effect that the distress deplored in the Speech was to be attributed to the non-representation of the working classes in Parliament. The Radicals were not unanimous, and the amendment was defeated by 283 against 39.

[6] *To F. Cobden*, August 29, 1841.

1841. during the recess, he will give way; if not, he will stick
ÆT. 37. to his sliding scale and the aristocracy. There is a rumour very industriously spread in London that we are going to have a better trade. This is one in the chapter of accidents upon which Peel depends for an escape into smooth water."

Now, as throughout the whole of the struggle, Cobden kept up the closest relations with the local leaders of the movement in the north. One of the most baneful effects of the concentration and intensity of parliamentary life is that members cease to inspire themselves with the more wholesome air of the nation outside. From the beginning to the end of his career, Cobden cared very little about the opinion of the House, and hoped very little from its disinterestedness. He never greatly valued the judgment of parliamentary coteries. It was the mind of the country that he always sought to know and to influence. And though he had proper confidence in the soundness of his own judgment, he was wholly free from the weakness of thinking that his judgment could stand alone. He was invariably eager to collect the opinions of his fellow-workers at Manchester, and not only to collect them, but to be guided by them.

"It is quite evident," he wrote to Mr. George Wilson, towards the end of September, "that Peel has made up his mind to prorogue without entering upon the consideration of the Corn Law. The business of the session will now be hurried on and brought to a close probably by the end of the week. Under these circumstances I wish to know the opinion of our friends in Manchester as to the course which it would be advisable for the few Anti-Corn Law members now in London to pursue. Will you be good enough at once to call together the whole of the Council, and consult with as many judicious people as you can, and determine whether you think anything, and what, can be done to promote the cause? The main question for you to decide is

whether it be advisable for Mr. Villiers to give notice of a 1841.
motion for discussing the question before the Houses are ÆT. 37.
prorogued. The Tories would shirk the discussion in the same way as heretofore. Do you think under such circumstances that it would advance our cause by persisting in a one-sided debate? I think the general opinion up here is that the way in which Peel has hitherto evaded the question, has done us good service by dissatisfying the public mind with the new Ministry. But we are not good judges of the public feeling, who are actors in a sphere of our own, where we are apt to be acted upon by our own preconceived opinions. You are in a better position for forming a correct judgment as to the state of the public mind. The question for you to decide really is whether the feeling out of doors would back a small party in the House struggling for a hearing of their cause now. Do you think there is a desire for us to make a pertinacious stand *now?* Be good enough to take the matter into your calm consideration, and give me the result of your deliberation by return. Mr. Villiers, who is now installed as our leader, would, I have no doubt, act upon your well-considered judgment. I would merely add that you would do well to take into consideration the probable amount of public demonstration to be made by memorials to the Queen during the next week. You will be able to form an estimate of the extent to which the example of Manchester will be followed in other places, and which must form a material consideration in deciding upon the course we ought to take in Parliament."[7]

Cobden made two other speeches in the course of the autumn session, after the re-election of the Ministers (Sept. 16—Oct. 7). Lord John Russell reproached the new Premier for asking for time to prepare his schemes for repairing the national finances. Peel justly asked him why,

[7] *To G. Wilson*, September, 1841.

1841. Ær. 37. if they were so convinced of the urgency of the evils inflicted on the country by the Corn Laws, if they thought that commercial distress was to be attributed to them, and that these laws were at the root of the sufferings of the working class—why they had allowed them to remain an open question, and why they remained in office, allowing Lord Melbourne to hold opposite opinions. Cobden rose to protest against treating the subject as a party question, and against making the House a mere debating club. He insisted on trying to keep the mind of the House fixed on the privation and distress in the manufacturing districts, and he urged the Minister not to postpone the question of the Corn Laws over the coming winter.

". . . . I sat through the voting of money, vastly edified and scandalized at the way in which the poor devils of tax-payers are robbed. The sum of 100,000*l.* for arming and clothing militia in Canada, light-houses in Jamaica, negro education, bishops all over the world, &c., &c., in goodly proportions. . . . The people are, I am afraid, fit for nothing better. I did not offer an objection, for it would have been ridiculous to do so. It did, however, cost me some efforts to hold my tongue. I am glad that you did not think my second speech too strong. I was not quite satisfied with it myself. It was, however, badly reported. I was rather better pleased with my third on Friday, when I found there was an effort made at first to annoy me, on the part of some young obscures, one of whom followed me with an evidently 'conned reply,' in which he had quotations from my speech at Manchester, about the Oxford education, the Ilissus, Scamander, &c. His speech was not reported. It was a mere prize essay oration, which, thanks to the practical turn that has been given to subjects of debate, finds no relish in the House now-a-days. It is quite clear that I am looked upon as a Gothic invader, and the classicals will

criticize me unmercifully. But I have vitality enough to rise above the little trips which my heels may get at first. Ultimately these attacks will only give me a surer foothold. The part of my last speech that struck home the most was at the close. I had observed an evident disposition on the Tory side to set up as philanthropists. Old Sir Robert Inglis sat with his hands folded ready to sigh, and if needful, to weep over a case of church destitution; he delivered a flaming panegyric upon Lord Ashley the other night, styling him *the friend of the unprotected*, after he had been canting about the sufferings of lunatics. Added to this, Peel has been professing the utmost anxiety for paupers, and Sir Eardley Wilmot is running after Sturge. When I told them at the close of my speech that I had been quietly observing all this, but it would not all do unless they showed their consistency by untaxing the poor man's loaf, there was a stillness and attention on the other side very much like the conduct of men looking aghast at the first consciousness of being found out. My style of speaking pleases the gallery people, and has attracted the notice of the Radicals out of doors. But the Tories, especially the young fry, regard me in no other way than as a petard would be viewed by people in a powder-magazine, a thing to be trampled on, kicked about, or put out in any way they can."[8]

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When Cobden rose on this last occasion there were cries of impatience from the ministerial side of the House, but this did not prevent him from persevering with an argumentative remonstrance against the incredulity or apathy with which the Government treated the distress of the manufacturing towns. The point which he pressed most keenly was the interchange of food and manufactures between England and the United States that would instantly follow repeal. He quoted from a petition to the Congress

[8] To F. Cobden, Sept. 27, 1841.

1841. Æt. 37. of the United States. The petitioner argued that if the English landowners would only be satisfied with a moderate duty in lieu of the existing sliding scale, there would then be a constant market for wheat in England, and the whole of the return would be required in British manufactured goods; the consequence of which would be that every spindle, wheel, and hammer in the manufacturing district in this country would be set free.

"Suppose now," Cobden went on, "that it were but the Thames instead of the Atlantic which separated the two countries—suppose that the people on one side were mechanics and artisans, capable by their industry of producing a vast supply of manufactures; and that the people on the other side were agriculturists, producing infinitely more than they could themselves consume of corn, pork, and beef—fancy these two separate peoples anxious and willing to exchange with each other the produce of their common industries, and fancy a demon rising from the middle of the river—for I cannot imagine anything human in such a position and performing such an office—fancy a demon rising from the river, and holding in his hand an Act of Parliament, and saying, 'You shall not supply each other's wants;' and then in addition to that, let it be supposed that this demon said to his victim with an affected smile, 'This is for your benefit; I do it entirely for your protection!' Where was the difference between the Thames and the Atlantic?"

It was after a vigorous and persistent description of the privations of the people in the North, that he turned sharply round upon the men whom he denounced for drawing the attention of Parliament away from the real issues to vague questions of philanthropy. "When I go down to the manufacturing districts," he said, "I know that I shall be returning to a gloomy scene. I know that starvation is

stalking through the land, and that men are perishing for want of the merest necessaries of life. When I witness this, and recollect that there is a law which especially provides for keeping our population in absolute want, I cannot help attributing murder to the Legislature of this country: and wherever I stand, whether here or out-of-doors, I will denounce that system of legislative murder." He then turned to one member who was a great friend of negro slaves, and to another who was a great friend of Church Establishment, and who had lately complimented Lord Ashley as the great friend of humanity generally, and of factory children in particular. "When I see a disposition among you," he said, "to trade in humanity, I will not question your motives, but this I will tell you, that if you would give force and grace to your professions of humanity, it must not be confined to the negro at the antipodes, nor to the building of churches, nor to the extension of Church establishments, nor to occasional visits to factories to talk sentiment over factory children—you must untax the people's bread."

Cobden's intervention in debate was more than a parliamentary incident. It was the symbol of a new spirit of self-assertion in a great social order. The Reform Bill had admitted manufacturing towns to a share of representation Cobden lost no time in vindicating the reality of this representation. The conflict of the next five years was not merely a battle about a customs duty; it was a struggle for political influence and social equality between the landed aristocracy and the great industrialists. Of this, an incident in the debates of the following session will furnish us with a sufficiently graphic illustration. It is only by reading the correspondence of that time, and listening to the men who still survive, without having left its passions behind them, that we realize the angry astonishment with which the old society

1841. of England beheld the first serious attempts of a new class
ÆT. 37. to assert its claim to take a foremost place. Many years after the fight began, when Mr. Bright was unseated at Manchester, we shall find that Cobden laid most stress on the ingratitude of the manufacturers of the northern capital in forgetting that Mr. Bright had been the "valiant defender of their order."

CHAPTER IX.

COBDEN AS AN AGITATOR.

In the autumn of 1841 there happened what proved to be a signal event in the annals of the League, and in Cobden's personal history. He and Mr. Bright made that solemn compact which gave so strong an impulse to the movement, and was the beginning of an affectionate and noble friendship that lasted without a cloud or a jar until Cobden's death. 1841. ÆT. 37.

Mr. Bright, who was seven years younger than Cobden, had made his acquaintance some time before the question of the Corn Laws had come up. He had gone over in the year 1836 or 1837 to Manchester, to call upon Cobden, "to ask him if he would be kind enough to come to Rochdale, and to speak at an education meeting which was about to be held in the schoolroom of the Baptist chapel in West Street of that town. I found him in his office in Mosley Street. I introduced myself to him. I told him what I wanted. His countenance lit up with pleasure to find that there were others that were working in this question, and he without hesitation agreed to come. He came, and he spoke; and though he was then so young as a speaker, yet the qualities of his speech were such as remained with him so long as he was able to speak at all—clearness, logic, a conversational eloquence, a persuasiveness which, when conjoined with the

1841. Ær. 37. absolute truth which there was in his eye and in his countenance—a persuasiveness which it was almost impossible to resist."

Then came the gradual formation of the League, Cobden's election to Parliament, and the close of his first session. "It was in September, in the year 1841," said Mr. Bright. "The sufferings throughout the country were fearful; and you who live now, but were not of age to observe what was passing in the country then, can have no idea of the state of your country in that year. . . . . At that time I was at Leamington, and I was, on the day when Mr. Cobden called upon me—for he happened to be there at the time on a visit to some relatives—I was in the depths of grief, I might almost say of despair; for the light and sunshine of my house had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a sainted life and of a too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called upon me as his friend, and addressed me, as you might suppose, with words of condolence.[1] After a time he looked up and said, 'There are thousands of houses in England at this moment where wives, mothers, and children are dying of hunger. Now,' he said, 'when the first paroxysm of your grief is past, I would advise you to come with me, and we will never rest till the Corn Law is repealed.' I accepted his invitation. I knew that the description he had given of the homes of thousands was not an exaggerated description. I felt in my conscience that there was a work which somebody must do, and therefore I accepted his invitation, and from that time we never ceased to labour hard on behalf of the resolution which we had made."

"For seven years," Mr. Bright says, "the discussion

[1] Mr. Bright lost his wife on the 10th of September, and Cobden's visit to him was on the 13th.

on that one question—whether it was good for a man to have half a loaf or a whole loaf—for seven years the discussion was maintained, I will not say with doubtful result, for the result was never doubtful, and never could be in such a cause; but for five years or more [1841-6] we devoted ourselves without stint; every working hour almost was given up to the discussion and to the movement in connexion with this question."[1]

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ÆT. 37.

This is an appropriate place for considering some of the qualifications that Cobden brought to the mission which he and his ally thus imposed upon themselves. In speaking of him I may seem to ignore fellow-workers whose share in the agitation was hardly less important than his own; without whose zeal, disinterestedness, and intelligence, the work of himself and Mr. Bright would have been of little effect, and could never have been undertaken. No history of the League could be perfect which did not commemorate the names and labours of many other able men, who devoted themselves with hardly inferior energy to the exhausting work of organization and propagandism. But these pages have no pretensions to tell the whole story; they only are concerned with so much of it as relates to one of its heroes. "We were not even the first," said Mr. Bright, "though afterwards, perhaps, we became the foremost before the public. But there were others before us." The public imagination was struck by the figures of the pair who had given themselves up to a great public cause. The alliance between them far more than doubled the power that either could have exerted without the other. The picture of two plain men leaving their homes and their business, and going

[1] This and the preceding passages are from the very beautiful address delivered by Mr. Bright, when he unveiled the statue of his friend at Bradford, July 25, 1877. The address is to be found in Mr. Thorold Rogers's volume of *Public Addresses of John Bright*, pp. 354—366.

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over the length and breadth of the land to convert the nation, had about it something apostolic: it presented something so far removed from the stereotyped ways of political activity, that this circumstance alone, apart from the object for which they were pleading, touched and affected people, and gave a certain dramatic interest to the long pilgrimages of the two men who had only become orators because they had something to say, which they were intent on bringing their hearers to believe, and which happened to be true, wise, and just.

The agitator has not been a very common personage in English history. The greatest that has ever been seen was O'Connell, and I do not know of any other, until the time of the League, who may be placed even as second to him. In the previous century Wilkes had made a great figure, and Wilkes was a man of real power and energy. But he was rather the symbol of a strong popular sentiment, than its inspirer; and he may be more truly said to have been borne on the crest of the movement, than to have given to it force or volume.

Cobden seemed to have few of the endowments of an agitator, as that character is ordinarily thought of. He had no striking physical gifts of the histrionic kind. He had one physical quality which must be ranked first among the secondary endowments of great workers. Later in life he said, "If I had not had the faculty of sleeping like a dead fish, in five minutes after the most exciting mental effort, and with the certainty of having oblivion for six consecutive hours, I should not have been alive now." In his early days, he was slight in frame and build. He afterwards grew nearer to portliness. He had a large and powerful head, and the indescribable charm of a candid eye. His features were not of a commanding type; but they were illuminated and made attractive by the brightness of intelligence, of sympathy, and of earnestness. About the mouth there was

a curiously winning mobility and play. His voice was clear, varied in its tones, sweet, and penetrating; but it had scarcely the compass, or the depth, or the many resources that have usually been found in orators who have drawn great multitudes of men to listen to them. Of nervous fire, indeed, he had abundance, though it was not the fire which flames up in the radiant colours of a strong imagination. It was rather the glow of a thoroughly convinced reason, of intellectual ingenuity, of argumentative keenness. It came from transparent honesty, thoroughly clear ideas, and a very definite purpose. These were exactly the qualities that Cobden's share in the work demanded. Any professor could have supplied a demonstration of the economic fallacy of monopoly. Fox, the Unitarian minister, was better able to stir men's spirits by pictures, which were none the less true for being very florid, of the social miseries that came of monopoly. In Cobden the fervour and the logic were mixed, and his fervour was seen to have its source in the strength of his logical confidence.

1841. Æt. 37.

It has often been pointed out how the two great spokesmen of the League were the complements of one another; how their gifts differed, so that one exactly covered the ground which the other was predisposed to leave comparatively untouched. The differences between them, it is true, were not so many as the points of resemblance. If in Mr. Bright there was a deeper austerity, in both there was the same homeliness of allusion, and the same graphic plainness. Both avoided the stilted abstractions of rhetoric, and neither was ever afraid of the vulgarity of details. In Cobden as in Bright, we feel that there was nothing personal or small, and that what they cared for so vehemently were great causes. There was a resolute standing aloof from the small things of party, which would be almost arrogant, if the whole texture of what they had to say were less

1841. Æt. 37.

thoroughly penetrated with political morality and with humanity. Then there came the points of difference. Mr. Bright had all the resources of passion alive within his breast. He was carried along by vehement political anger, and, deeper than that, there glowed a wrath as stern as that of an ancient prophet. To cling to a mischievous error seemed to him to savour of moral depravity and corruption of heart. What he saw was the selfishness of the aristocracy and the landlords, and he was too deeply moved by hatred of this, to care to deal very patiently with the bad reasoning which their own self-interest inclined his adversaries to mistake for good. His invective was not the expression of mere irritation, but a profound and menacing passion. Hence he dominated his audiences from a height, while his companion rather drew them along after him as friends and equals. Cobden was by no means incapable of passion, of violent feeling, or of vehement expression. His fighting qualities were in their own way as formidable as Mr. Bright's; and he had a way of dropping his jaw and throwing back his head, when he took off the gloves for an encounter in good earnest, which was not less alarming to his opponents than the more sombre style of his colleague. Still, it was not passion to which we must look for the secret of his oratorical success. I have asked many scores of those who knew him, Conservatives as well as Liberals, what this secret was, and in no single case did my interlocutor fail to begin, and in nearly every case he ended as he had begun, with the word *persuasiveness*. Cobden made his way to men's hearts by the union which they saw in him of simplicity, earnestness, and conviction, with a singular facility of exposition. This facility consisted in a remarkable power of apt and homely illustration, and a curious ingenuity in framing the argument that happened to be wanted. Besides his skill in thus hitting on the right

argument, Cobden had the oratorical art of presenting it in the way that made its admission to the understanding of a listener easy and undenied. He always seemed to have made exactly the right degree of allowance for the difficulty with which men follow a speech, as compared with the ease of following the same argument on a printed page which they may con and ponder until their apprehension is complete. Then men were attracted by his mental alacrity, by the instant readiness with which he turned round to grapple with a new objection. Prompt and confident, he was never at a loss, and he never hesitated. This is what Mr. Disraeli meant when he spoke of Cobden's "sauciness." It had an excellent effect, because everybody knew that it sprang, not from levity or presumption, but from a free mastery of his subject.

1841. Æt. 37.

If in one sense the Corn Laws did not seem a promising theme for a popular agitation, they were excellently fitted to bring out Cobden's peculiar strength, for they dealt with firm matter and demonstrable inferences, and this was the region where Cobden's powers naturally exercised themselves. In such an appeal to sentiment and popular passion as the contemporary agitation of O'Connell for Repeal, he could have played no leading part.[3] Where knowledge and logic were the proper instruments, Cobden was a master.

Enormous masses of material for the case poured every week into the offices of the League. All the day long Cobden was talking with men who had something to tell him. Correspondents from every quarter of the land plied him with information. Yet he was never overwhelmed by the volume of the stream. He was incessantly on the alert for a useful fact, a telling illustration, a new fallacy to expose. So dexterously did he move through the ever-growing piles

[3] See Mr. McCarthy's *History of Our Own Times*, i. 340, 348.

1841. of matter, that it seemed to his companions as if nothing
ÆT. 37. apposite ever escaped him, and nothing irrelevant ever detained him.

A political or religious agitator must not be afraid of incessant repetition. Repetition is his most effective instrument. The fastidiousness which is proper to literature, and which makes a man dread to say the same thing twice, is in the field of propagandism mere impotency. This is one reason why even the greatest agitators in causes which have shaken the world, are often among the least interesting men in history. Cobden had moral and social gifts which invest him with a peculiar attraction, and will long make his memory interesting as that of a versatile nature; but he was never afraid of the agitator's art of repeating his formula, his principles, his illustrations, his phrases, with untiring reiteration.

Though he abounded in matter, Cobden can hardly be described as copious.. He is neat and pointed, nor is his argument ever left unclenched; but he permits himself no large excursions. What he was thinking of was the matter immediately in hand, the audience before his eyes, the point that would tell best then and there, and would be most likely to remain in men's recollections. For such purposes copiousness is ill-fitted; that is for the stately leisure of the pulpit. Cobden's task was to leave in his hearer's mind a compact answer to each current fallacy, and to scotch or kill as many protectionist sophisms as possible within the given time. What is remarkable, is that while he kept close to the matter and substance of his case, and resorted comparatively little to sarcasm, humour, invective, pathos, or the other elements that are catalogued in manuals of rhetoric, yet no speaker was ever further removed from prosiness, or came into more real and sympathetic contact with his audience. His speaking was thoroughly businesslike, and yet it was never dull. It was

not, according to the old definition of oratory, reason fused in passion, but reason fused by the warmth of personal geniality. No one has ever reached Cobden's pitch of success as a platform speaker, with a style that seldom went beyond the vigorous and animated conversation of a bright and companionable spirit. 1841. ÆT. 37.

After all, it is not tropes and perorations that make the popular speaker; it is the whole impression of his personality. We who only read them, can discern certain admirable qualities in Cobden's speeches; aptness in choosing topics, lucidity in presenting them, buoyant confidence in pressing them home. But those who listened to them felt much more than all this. They were delighted by mingled vivacity and ease, by directness, by spontaneousness and reality, by the charm, so effective and so uncommon between a speaker and his audience, of personal friendliness and undisguised cordiality. Let me give an illustration of this. Cobden once had an interview with Rowland Hill, some time in 1838, and gave evidence in favour of the proposed reform in the postage. Rowland Hill, in writing to him afterwards, excuses himself for troubling Cobden with his private affairs: "Your conversation, evidence, and letters, have created a feeling in my mind so like that which one entertains towards an old friend, that I am apt to forget that I have met you but once." It was just the same with bodies of men as it was with individuals. No public speaker was ever so rapid and so successful in establishing genial relations of respect without formality, and intimacy without familiarity. One great source of this, in Mr. Bright's words, was "the absolute truth that shone in his eye and in his countenance."

I have spoken of Cobden's patience in acquiring and shaping matter. This was surpassed by his inexhaustible patience in dealing with the mental infirmities of those

1841. whom it was his business to persuade. He was wholly free
ÆT. 37. from the unmeasured anger against human stupidity, which is itself one of the most provoking forms of that stupidity. Cobden was not without the faculty of intellectual contempt, and he had the gift of irony; but in the contempt was no presumption, and it was irony without truculence. There came a time when he found that he could do nothing with men; when he could hardly even hope to find an audience that would suffer him to speak. But during the work of the League, at any rate, he had none of that bias against his own countrymen to which the reformer in every nation is so liable, because upon the reformer their defects press very closely and obstructively, while he has no reason to observe the same or worse defects in other nations.

It has often been said that Cobden was a good Englishman, and he was so, in spite of finer qualities which our neighbours are not willing to allow to us. London society, and smart journalists who mistook a little book-knowledge for culture, were in the habit of disparaging Cobden as a common manufacturer, without an idea in his head beyond buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest. This was not the way in which he struck the most fastidious, critical, and refined man of letters in Europe, accustomed to mix with the most important personages of literature and affairs then alive. Prosper Mérimée saw a great deal of Cobden in 1860, when they both spent part of the winter at Cannes. "Cobden," he wrote to his intimate correspondent, "is a man of an extremely interesting mind; quite the opposite of an Englishman in this respect, that you never hear him talk commonplaces, and that he has few prejudices." It was just because he was not a man of prejudice, that he had none against his own countrymen. We saw how when he was travelling in America, he found his British blood up, as he said, and he

dealt faithfully with the disparagers of the mother country.[4] 1841.
Returning from France on one occasion, Cobden says in his journal, that they all remarked on the handsome women who were seen on the English platforms, and all agreed that they were handsomer than those whom they had left on the other side. "The race of men and women in the British Islands," Cobden goes on to himself, "is the finest in the world in a physical sense; and although they have many moral defects and some repulsive qualities, yet on the whole I think the English are the most outspoken, truthful men in the world, and this virtue lies at the bottom of their political and commercial greatness." ÆT. 37.

This conviction inspired him with a peculiar respect for his great popular audiences, and they instinctively felt the presence of it, making a claim to their good-will and their attention. Cobden differed from his countrymen, as to what it is that will make England great, but he was as anxious that England should be great, and as proud of English virtues and energies, as the noisiest patriot in a London music hall.

Cobden always said that it was an advantage to him as an agitator that he was a member of the Church of England. He used to tell of men who came up to him and declared that their confidence in him dated from the moment when they learnt that he was a churchman. It was, perhaps, a greater advantage to him than he knew. However little we may admire a State establishment of religion, it is certain that where such an establishment happens to exist, those who have been brought up in it, and have tranquilly conformed to its usages, escape one source of a certain mental asperity and the spirit of division. This is no credit to them or to the institution; any more than the asperity is a discredit to those who do not conform to the institution. Nay, one

[4] Above pp. 33-4.

1841. Æt. 37. strong reason why some disapprove of systems of ecclesiastical privilege, is exactly that in modern societies it necessarily engenders this spirit of division. But in itself the spirit of division is no element of strength, but rather of weakness, for one whose task is to touch doubtful or unwilling hearers.

Temperament, however, had a larger share than institutions in Cobden's faculty of moral sympathy. There is scanty evidence of anything like an intense spirituality in his nature; he was neither oppressed nor elevated by the mysteries, the aspirations, the remorse, the hope, that constitute religion. So far as we can have means of knowing, he was not of those who live much in the Unseen. But for moral goodness, in whatever association he came upon it, he had a reverence that came from his heart of hearts. While leaning strongly towards those scientific theories of motive and conduct, of which, as has been already said, George Combe was in those days the most active propagandist, he felt no contempt, provided only their practical endeavour was towards good, for those who clung narrowly to older explanations of the heart of man. In a letter written to Combe himself, when the struggle against the Corn Laws was over, Cobden allows himself to talk freely on his own attitude in these high matters:—

. . . "With reference," he says, "to your remarks as to the evangelical dissenters and religionists generally, and their views of your philosophy of morals—I will confess to you that *I* am not inclined to quarrel with that class of my countrymen. I see the full force of what you urge, but am inclined to hope more from them in time than any other party in the State. Gradually and imperceptibly to themselves they are catching the spirit of the age, so far as to recognize the moral laws as a part of our natural organization. They do not accept your views to the *superseding* of their own,

but, like geology, your science is forcing its way alongside of preconceived ideas, and they will for a time go together without perceptibly clashing.

"I do not quarrel with the religionists, for I find them generally enforcing or at all events recognizing and professing to act upon (they do not, I admit, sufficiently preach it) the morality of the New Testament, and you can do no more. The only difference is that John Calvin and George Combe act upon different theories, and rely upon different motives, and start from very different premises, but they recognize the self-same ends secularly speaking, and I cannot quarrel with either . . . I am by nature a religionist. I was much struck with your remark when you mapped my head eleven years ago,—'Why, if you had been born in the middle ages, you would have made a good monk, you have so much veneration!' That was a triumph for phrenology, for you could have formed no such notion from anything you had seen or heard of me. I have a strong religious feeling,—a sympathy for men who act under that impulse; I reverence it as the great leverage which has moved mankind to powerful action. I acknowledge that it has been perverted to infinite mischief. I confess it has been the means of degrading men to brutish purposes . . . but it has also done glorious deeds for liberty and human exaltation, and it is destined to do still better things. It is fortunate for me that whilst possessing a strong logical faculty, which keeps me in the path of rationalism, I have the religious sympathy which enables me to co-operate with men of exclusively religious sentiment. I mean it is fortunate for my powers of usefulness in this my day and generation. To this circumstance I am greatly indebted for the success of the great Free-Trade struggle, which has been more indebted to the organ of veneration for its success, than is generally known.

"I am not without hopes that the same fortunate circum-

1841. stance in organization may enable me to co-operate efficiently
ÆT. 37. with the most active and best spirits of our day, in the work of moral and intellectual EDUCATION. I could insist upon the necessity of secular teaching and training without wounding the religious prejudices of any man, excepting the grovelling bigots whether of the High Church party or the opposite extreme, against whom I could make war in the same spirit which has in the case of the Corn monopolists enabled me to deprive them of the pretence for personal resentment, even in the hour of their defeat and humiliation.

"I have said that I have a strong feeling of sympathy for the religious sentiment. But I sympathize with all moral men who are not *passive* moralists: with them it is difficult to sympathize, but I venerate and trust them. Especially do I sympathize with those who labour and make sacrifices for the diffusion of sound moral principles. I will own, however, that it is unpleasant to my feelings to associate with those who, whilst they indulge in coarse sceptical allusions to our faith, do not in their private life manifest that they impose a better restraint upon themselves than is to be found in the New Testament. My active public life has sometimes thrown me into such company, and with these *esprits forts*, as the French call them, I have no sympathy. My maxim is in such predicaments to avoid theological discussions (here again is my veneration over-riding causality), and to avow that I am resolved to follow Bonaparte's advice—to adhere to the religion of my mother, who was an energetically pious woman."[1]

No whisper was ever seriously raised against Cobden's transparent honesty. What is worth remarking is that his sincerity was not of that cheap and reckless kind, by virtue of which men sometimes in one wild outburst of plain speech cut themselves off from chances of public usefulness

[1] *To George Combe*, Aug. 1, 1846.

for the remainder of their lives. He laid down certain social ends, which he thought desirable, and which he believed that he could promote. And when one of these was fixed in his mind, and set definitely before him, he became the most circumspect of creatures. Being a man of action, and not a speculative teacher, he took care not to devote his energies to causes in which he did not see a good chance of making some effective mark, either on legislation or on important sections of public opinion. "I am cautious to a fault," he once wrote, "and nothing will be done by me that has not the wisdom of the serpent, as much as the harmlessness of the dove in it."*

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This was only another way of saying that strong enthusiasm in him was no hindrance to strong sense. Instead of increasing the elements of friction—the besetting weakness of reformers and dissidents of all kinds—he took infinite trouble to reduce these elements to the lowest possible point. Hence he was careful not to take up too many subjects at once, because the antagonism generated by each would have been made worse by the antagonism belonging to every other, and he would have called up a whole host of enemies together, instead of leaving himself free to deal with one at a time. A correspondent once wrote to him on this point.

"You have opened a very important question," Cobden replied, "in respect to the duty of a public man to advocate all the changes to which he may be favourable. I have often reflected upon this. Bacon says, if you have a handful of truths, open but one finger at a time. He is not the safest moral guide, I admit, but I am not sure that he is not to some extent right in this view. If we are to declare our convictions upon all subjects, and if abstract reason is to be our guide, without reference to time and circumstance, why should not I, for instance, avow myself a republican? A

* *To S. Lucas*, Jan. 27, 1862.

1841. republic is undeniably the most rational form of government
ÆT. 37. for free men. But I doubt whether I should enhance my power of usefulness by advocating that form of government for England. But whilst I do not think I should act wisely by putting forth all I think, in a practical way I so far admit the principle that I would not advocate the opposite of what I am convinced is the truth abstractedly. And this brings me to my old ground of trying to do one thing at a time. By this I mean merely that I have an aptitude for certain questions. Other people have a talent for others, and I think a division of labour is necessary for success in political, as in industrial life."[7]

This wise economy brought its reward. Cobden did not carry the world with him in his own lifetime, but what he did by his method was to bring certain principles of human progress into line with the actual politics of the day. He did not create a majority, but he achieved the first difficult step of creating a strong minority, and this not merely of sympathizers in the closet, but of active followers in the nation.

It was what he called his wisdom of the serpent that gave Cobden his power in the other arts of a successful agitator, which are less conspicuous but hardly less indispensable, than commanding or persuasive oratory. He applied the same qualities in the actual business of the League which he brought to bear in his speeches. He was indefatigable in his industry, fertile in ingenious devices for bringing the objects of the League before the country, constantly on the alert for surprising a hostile post, never losing a chance of turning a foe or a neutral into a friend, and never allowing his interest about the end for which he was working, to confuse his vigilant concentration upon the means. The danger of great confederacies like the League is that they

[7] *To the Rev. Thomas Spencer*, April 28, 1842.

become mechanical. Machinery must of necessity play a large part. Circulars, conferences, subscriptions, advertisements, deputations, eternal movings and secondings—all these things are apt to bury the vital part of a movement under a dreary and depressing fussiness, that makes one sometimes wonder whether the best means of saving an institution might not be to establish a society for overthrowing it. A society of this kind seems often a short way for choking the most earnest spirits with dusty catch-words, that are incessantly being ground out by the treadmill of agitation. It was Cobden's fresh and sanguine temper that bore him triumphantly through this peril, though none of the energetic men with whom he worked was more busily intent on every detail of their organization. He had none of that fastidiousness which is repelled by the vulgarities of a proselytizing machine. He was like a general with a true genius for war. The strategy was a delight to him; in tactics he was one of the most adroit of men; he looked to everything; he showed the boldness, the vigilance, the tenacity, the resource, of a great commander. Above all, he had the commander's gift of encouraging and stimulating others. He had enthusiasm, patience, and good humour, which is the most valuable of all qualities in a campaign. There was as little bitterness in his nature as in any human being that ever lived: so little that he was able to say, at the end of seven years of as energetic an agitation as could be carried on, short of physical force, that he believed he had not made a single enemy, nor wounded a single man's personal feelings.

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ÆT. 37.

Critics usually singled out Cobden's logical faculty as his strongest trait, and it was so; but he was naturally inclined to think of the conclusions of his logic in poetized forms. He always delighted, in spite of the wretched simile with

1841. which they close, in the lines in which Cowper anticipated
Ær. 37. the high economic doctrine :—

Again—the band of commerce was design'd,
To associate all the branches of mankind,
And if a boundless plenty be the robe,
Trade is the golden Girdle of the globe.
Wise to promote whatever end he means,
God opens fruitful Nature's various scenes,
Each climate needs what other climes produce,
And offers something to the general use ;
No land but listens to the common call,
And in return receives supply from all.
This genial intercourse and mutual aid
Cheers what were else an universal shade,
Calls Nature from her ivy-mantled den,
And softens human rock-work into men.

From Cowper, too, he was never weary of quoting the lines about liberty :—

'Tis liberty alone that gives the flower
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume,
And we are weeds without it. All constraint
Except what wisdom lays on evil men
Is evil.

It was this association of solid doctrine with genial enthusiasm and high ideals, that distinguished Cobden from too many preachers of what our humourist has called the gospel according to McCrowdy. It was this kindly imaginativeness in him which caught men's hearts. His ideals were constantly sneered at as low, material, common, unworthy, especially by the class whose lives are one long course of indolence, dilettanteism, and sensuality. George Combe tells how one evening in 1852 he was in the drawing-room of some great lady, who, amid the applause of her friends, denounced Cobden's policy as never rising beyond a mere "bagman's millennium."[1] This was the clever way, among the selfish and insolent, of saying that the ideal

[1] *Life of George Combe*, ii. 309.

which Cobden cherished was comfort for the mass, not luxury for the few. He knew much better than they, that material comfort is, as little as luxury, the highest satisfaction of men's highest capacities; but he could well afford to scorn the demand for fine ideals of life on the lips of a class who were starving the workers of the country in order to save their own rents. 1841. ÆT. 37.

There is one more point on which it is worth while to say a word in connexion with Cobden's character as an agitator. The great danger of the career is that it may in time lessen a man's moral self-possession. Effect becomes the decisive consideration instead of truth; a good meeting grows into a final object in life; the end of existence is a paradise of loud and prolonged cheering; and character is gradually destroyed by the parasites of self-consciousness and vanity. On one occasion, in 1845, as we shall see, Cobden was betrayed, excusably enough, into some strong language about Sir Robert Peel. Miss Martineau, George Combe, and others, rebuked him rather sharply. He took the rebuke with perfect temper and humility, and in seeking to excuse himself, he described his feelings about public life in words of which it is impossible to doubt the exact truth. "You must not judge me," he said, "by what I say at these tumultuous public meetings. I constantly regret the necessity of violating good taste and kind feeling in my public harangues. I say advisedly *necessity*, for I defy anybody to keep the ear of the public for seven years upon one question, without studying to amuse as well as instruct. People do not attend public meetings to be taught, but to be excited, flattered, and pleased. If they are simply lectured, they may sit out the lesson for once, but they will not come again; and as I have required them again and again, I have been obliged to amuse them, not by standing on my head or eating fire, but by kindred feats of jugglery,

1841. such as appeals to their self-esteem, their combativeness, or
ÆT. 37. their humour. You know how easily in touching these feelings one degenerates into flattery, vindictiveness, and grossness. I really sometimes wonder how I have escaped so well as I have done. By nature I am not a mob orator. It is an effort for me to speak in public. The applause of a meeting has no charm for me. When I address an audience, it is from a sense of duty and utility, from precisely the motive which impels me to write an article in the *League* newspaper, and with as little thought of personal *éclat*. Do not, therefore, be alarmed with the idea that my head will be turned with applause. It would be a relief to me if I knew there was no necessity for my ever appearing again at a public meeting."[9]

[9] *To George Combe*, Dec. 29, 1845.

CHAPTER X.

THE NEW CORN LAW.

In the interval between the prorogation and the great session of 1842 it was commonly understood that the Government would certainly do something with the Corn Law. Expectation was not sanguine among the men in the north. Some of the more impatient were so irritated by the delay, that they even wished to agitate for the overthrow of a government which had just been appointed, and which commanded an overwhelming majority. Cobden was wiser. To one of the shrewdest of his allies he wrote some useful truth:— 1842 ÆT. 38.

"I do not like your idea," he said, "of getting the deputies to pass a vote for dismissing the Ministry. That would be taken as a partisan movement—which it really would be—and we should lose moral influence by it. Let us not forget that we were very tolerant of the Whig Ministers, even after Melbourne had laughed in our faces and called us madmen. The present Government will do something. It is the House of Commons, and not the Ministers, that we ought to attack. I do not see how with decency we can worry the Queen to change her Ministers, whilst the *people's* representatives have made her take to Peel against her consent. And amongst the representatives who have done this are those from Liverpool, Warrington, Wigan, Leeds, Blackburn,

1842. Lancaster, etcetera. Really when we think of these places,
ÆT. 38. it ought to make us modest.

"I have been thinking a good deal of the plan of district meetings alluded to in a former letter to Mr. Rawson, and am more and more favourable to it. I am convinced that spontaneous efforts through the country would tell more powerfully upon the aristocracy, than another great meeting in Manchester. The question has been too much confined to Manchester. The cotton lords are not more popular than the landlords." [1]

Although he deprecated the agitation of impatience, Cobden was as eager and as active as anybody else in the agitation of persuasion. He spoke at a great conference, held at Derby, of the merchants of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Leicestershire, where he made a vigorous onslaught upon what he called the Land-tax fraud. From the Trent he found his way to the Clyde, while Mr. Bright went to Dublin, as well as to every place nearer home where he could get men to listen to him. In all the centres of industry people were urged to form associations, to get up petitions, and to hold district meetings of deputies. They were to collect information as to the state of trade, the rate of wages, the extent of pauperism, and other facts bearing upon the food monopoly, as all these things affected their local industry; the woollen trade at Leeds, the iron trade at Wolverhampton, the earthenware trade in the Potteries, the flax trade at Dundee, the cotton trade at Manchester and Glasgow.

The lecturers continued their work. One of them went among the farmers and labourers on Sir James Graham's estate, where he did not forget the landlord's idyllic catalogue of the blessings of the rural poor. "What!" cried the lecturer, "six shillings a week for wages, and the morning's sun, and the singing of birds, and sportive lambs, and

[1] *To G. Wilson.* Leamington, Oct. 12, 1841.

winding streams, and the mountain breeze, and a little wholesome labour—six shillings a week, and all this! And nothing to do with your six shillings a week, but merely to pay your rent, buy your food, clothe yourselves and your families, and lay by something for old age! Happy people!" In many rural districts the only arguments which the lecturers were called upon to resist were stones and brickbats; and even in some of the towns they still encountered rough and unfair treatment from members of the respectable classes, and their hired ruffians. The Chartists were for the time less violently hostile.

Among other devices this autumn was that of a great bazaar, which should both add to the funds of the League, and bring the friends of its objects into closer personal contact. The bazaar was held in the beginning of the following February, in the Royal Theatre at Manchester. It was a great success, and produced nearly ten thousand pounds. The following may serve to show Cobden's eye for the small things of agitation, and the unconsidered trifles that affect public opinion:—

"I have just got your letter, and am delighted that you are satisfied with the bazaar prospects. Really I wonder how you and your four coadjutors endure the immense exertions called for in this undertaking. You must not look upon the mere money return as the sole test of success. It will give us a position in the public eye worth all the outlay. I remember twelve months ago feeling apprehensive that the monopolist papers would have deterred the ladies from appearing as sellers at the stalls by their blackguardism. Certainly three years ago that would have been the tone of the *Herald*, *Post*, and *Bull*. Now what a marked change is seen in those papers; not a joke or attempt at ribald wit. All is fair and even laudatory. In this fact alone I see the evidence of a great moral triumph of the League. Could

1842. you not get a succession of notices in the papers similar to
Æt. 38. the *Globe* last evening? Might not R. employ his pen in that way? Tell him not to be too rhapsodical or eulogistic in his descriptions, but to give from day to day a few facts and scraps of information which would induce the papers to insert the articles as news. There should be a description of the arrivals of the great trains filled with country Leaguers. In the next *League* let as long a list as possible of the people of rank who have attended be given—this is very important."[1]

Their newspaper deserves a word. Its energy was as striking as the energy of their speakers. Its leading articles, many of them written by Cobden and Bright themselves, were broad and weighty statements of the newest aspect of their case. Any unlucky phrase that fell from a monopolist was pounced upon and made the text of a vivacious paragraph. No incautious admission from the other side was ever allowed to escape, until all the most damaging conclusions that could be drawn from it had been worked out to the very uttermost. All the news of the day was scanned with a vigilant eye, and no item that could be turned into an argument or an illustration was left unimproved. This ingenuity and verve saved the paper from the monotony of most journals of a single purpose. Its pages were lighted up by reports of the speeches of Cobden, Bright, and Fox. The pictures with which it abounds of the condition of the common people, are more graphic than the most brilliant compositions of mere literary history. It does not affect us as the organ of a sect; though it preaches from one text, it is always human and social. There were Poor Men's Songs, Anti-Corn-Law Hymns, and Anti-Bread-Tax Collects. Nor did the editor forget Byron's famous lines from the *Age of Bronze*, a thousand times declaimed in this long war:—

[1] *To G. Wilson*, November, 1841.

"See these inglorious Cincinnati swarm,
Farmers of war, dictators of the farm;
Their ploughshare was the sword in hireling hands,
Their fields manured by gore of other lands;
Safe in their barns, these Sabine tillers sent
Their brethren out to battle—why? for rent!
Year after year they voted cent. per cent.,
Blood, sweat, and tear-wrung millions—why? for rent!
They roar'd, they dined, they drank, they swore they meant
To die for England—why then live? for rent!
The Peace has made one general malcontent
Of these high-market patriots; war was rent!
Their love of country, millions all mispent,
How reconcile? by reconciling rent!
And will they not repay the treasures lent?
No: down with every thing, and up with rent!
Their good, ill, health, wealth, joy, or discontent,
Being, end, aim, religion—rent, rent, rent!

A volunteer in Preston this winter began to issue on his own account a quaint little sheet of four quarto pages, called *The Struggle*, and sold for a halfpenny. It had no connexion with any association, and nobody was responsible for its contents but the man who wrote, printed, and sold it. In two years eleven hundred thousand copies had been circulated. *The Struggle* is the very model for a plain man who wishes to affect the opinion of the humbler class, without the wasteful and, for the most part, ineffectual machinery of a great society. It contains in number after number the whole arguments of the matter in the pithiest form, and in language as direct if not as pure as Cobbett's. Sometimes the number consists simply of some more than usually graphic speech by Cobden or by Fox. There are racy dialogues, in which the landlord always gets the worst of it; and terse allegories in which the Duke of Buckingham or the Duke of Richmond figures as inauspiciously as Bunyan's Mr. Badman. The Bible is ransacked for appropriate texts, from the simple clause in the Lord's Prayer about our daily bread, down to Solomon's saying: "He that withholdeth the corn, the people shall curse him; but blessings shall be

1842. upon the head of him that selleth it." On the front page of
ÆT. 38. each number was a woodcut, as rude as a schoolboy's drawing, but full of spirit and cleverness, whether satirizing the Government, or contrasting swollen landlords with famine-stricken operatives, or painting some homely idyll of the industrious poor, to point the greatest of political morals, that "domestic comfort is the object of all reforms."

Cobden had, at the beginning of the movement, been very near to securing the services, in the way of pictorial illustration, of a man who afterwards became very famous. This was Thackeray, then only known to a small public as the author of the *Hoggarty Diamond*. "Some inventor of a new mode of engraving," Mr. Henry Cole wrote to Cobden, "told Mr. Thackeray that it was applicable to the designs for the Corn Laws. Three drawings of your Anglo-Polish Allegory have been made and have failed. So Thackeray has given up the invention, and wood engraving must be used. This will materially alter the expense. . . . . I hope you will think as well of the accompanying sketch—very rough, of course—as all I have shown it to, do. It was the work of only a few minutes, and I think, with its corpses, gibbet, and flying carrion crow, is as suggestive as you can wish. We both thought that a common soldier would be better understood than any more allegorical figure. It is only in part an adaptation of your idea, but I think a successful one. Figures representing eagerness of exchange, a half-clothed Pole offering bread, and a weaver manufactures; would be idea enough for a design alone. Of course, there may be any changes you please in this present design. I think for the multitude it would be well to have the ideas very simple and intelligible to all. The artist is a genius, both with his pencil and his pen. His vocation is literary. He is full of humour and feeling. Hitherto he has not had occasion to think much on the subject of Corn Laws, and therefore

wants the stuff to work upon. He would like to combine both writing and drawing when sufficiently primed, and then he would write and illustrate ballads, or tales, or anything. I think you would find him a most effective auxiliary, and perhaps the best way to fill him with matter for illustrations, would be to invite him to see the weavers, their mills, shuttles, etcetera. If you like the sketch, perhaps you will return it to me, and I will put it in the way of being engraved.

"He will set about Lord Ashley when we have heard your opinion of the present sketch. Thackeray is the writer of an article in the last number of the *Westminster Review*, on French caricatures, and many other things. For some time he managed the *Constitutional* newspaper. He is a college friend of Charles Buller. We think the idea of an ornamental emblematical heading of the Circular good. The lower class of readers do not like to have to cut the leaves of a paper. Another, but a smaller class, like a small-sized page, because it is more convenient for binding. Corn Law readers lie, I suppose, chiefly among the former. Will you send your circular to Thomas Carlyle, Cheyne Street, Chelsea? He was quoted in last week's Circular, and is making studies into the condition of the working class."[1]

The approach of the time for the assembling of Parliament drew men's minds away from everything else, and expectation became centred with new intensity on the scheme which the Minister would devise for the restoration of national prosperity. The retirement of an important member of the Cabinet during the recess had greatly quickened public excitement among both Protectionists and Free Traders. Both felt that their question was at stake, and that the Prime Minister would not allow the duty on corn to stand as it was. Peel has told us, in the Memoirs published after

[1] *H. Cole to R. Cobden*, June 22, 1839.

1842. Ær. 38. his death, exactly what happened during the autumn of 1841. In conformity with his general practice, he brought the subject under the consideration of his colleagues in written memoranda. These memoranda, he said, afforded the best opportunity for mature consideration of facts and arguments, and were most effectual against misconstruction and hasty, inconsiderate decision.[4] In them he now pointed out with unanswerable force the evils of the existing system. He dwelt more especially on the violent fluctuations in the corn duty, and the consequent derangements and unsteadiness of the markets. He showed how little the duties on importation could do towards keeping up a permanent high price. All that law could effect was to provide that, so long as corn grown in this country should not exceed a certain price, there should be no serious danger from competition with corn grown in other countries. What was that price? The law of 1815 had assumed that wheat could not be profitably grown at a lower price than eighty shillings a quarter. Events had shown that this was absurd; the averages of a number of years came to fifty-six shillings. It seemed wise, then, so to readjust the machinery of the sliding scale as to tend to secure that price.

The Duke of Buckingham, whose name figures so often in the sarcasms and invectives of the League, at once resigned his seat in the Cabinet rather than be a party to any meddling with the Corn Law of 1828. Even those who remained, seem to have pressed for an understanding, as was afterwards openly done in Parliament, that whatever amount of protection was set up by the new law should be permanently adhered to. This guarantee, Peel was far too conscientious to consent in any form to give. The Cabinet at length, with many misgivings, assented to their chief's arguments, and for the time the party was saved.

[4] *Memoirs*, ii. 29.

I may as well quote here a passage from one of Cobden's familiar letters to his brother, which describes the episode to much the same effect as Peel's more dignified narrative :— 1842. Æt. 38.

"Whilst I was with McGregor, he showed me a copy of the scale of duties which he had prepared under Peel's directions, and which he proposed to the Cabinet, causing Buckingham's retirement, and nearly leading to a break-up altogether. The scale was purposely devised to be as nearly as possible equal to an 8*s.* fixed duty. It was 8*s.* at 56*s.*, rising a shilling of duty with a shilling fall of prices till it reached 16*s.*, which was the maximum duty, and falling a shilling in duty with the rise of a shilling in price. With the exception of Ripon, he could get no support in the Cabinet. Lyndhurst, like an old fox, refused to vote (as I am told), not knowing whether Peel or the monopolists might be conqueror, and being himself equally happy to serve God or Mammon. The Duke of Bucks got hold of Richmond, who secured Wellington, who by the aid of Stanley and Graham frustrated Peel's intentions. The latter told them that no other prime minister after him would ever take office to give the landlords even an 8*s.* maximum duty. I learn from several quarters that Stanley is one of Peel's stoutest opponents against any alterations of a beneficial character in the monopolies. Last autumn I remember writing to Langton (at Heywood's) a letter for Birley's eye, in which I told him that if Peel's Cabinet were pressed for a liberal corn law by the Lancashire Conservatives, it would aid Peel in forcing his colleagues to go along with him, and be the very thing he would like. McGregor now confirms my view." [5]

The League resolved that they at any rate would leave

[5] *To F. Cobden*, June 22, 1842.

1842. nothing undone to support or overawe the Prime Minister.
ÆT. 38. On the eve of the session several hundreds of delegates, including Cobden, O'Connell, Mr. Bright, Mr. Villiers, and Mr. Milner Gibson, assembled at the Crown and Anchor. They learned that the Prime Minister had that morning refused to receive a deputation from them, on the ground of his numerous engagements. The *Times* had a contemptuous article, mocking at them for the presumption and impertinence of their conduct. These deputies from country associations and religious congregationalists, instead of settling their differences with one another, had yet on one single point, forsooth, discovered a system so pure that in a single interview the greatest and most experienced of statesmen would be thrown on his haunches. Perhaps these gentlemen would be willing to offer their services as members of Her Majesty's Privy Council. And so forth, in that vein of cheap ridicule with which the ephemera of the leading article are wont to buzz about all new men and unfamiliar causes. Ridicule notwithstanding, the deputies thronged down to the House of Commons with something so like tumult, that the police turned them out and cleared the lobbies. As they crowded round the approaches to the House, the irritated men hailed with abusive names those whom they knew to be champions of the abhorred monopoly. It was noticed that they did not agree in their cries. While all shouted out, "*No sliding scale*," some called for a fixed duty, and others clamoured for "*Total and immediate repeal.*"

The ministerial plan was soon known, and brought scanty comfort to the men of the north, as their friends rushed down the corridors to tell them what it was to be. Sir Robert Peel could not accept their explanation of the prevailing depression and distress. That was due, he contended, to over-investment of borrowed capital in manufactures; to

the displacement of hand-loom weaving by steam power; to monetary difficulties in the United States, and consequent diminution of demand for our manufactures; to interruption of the China trade; finally, to alarms of war in Europe, and the stagnation of commerce which always follows such alarms. To alter the Corn Law would touch none of these sources of the mischief, and would be no remedy. At the same time he thought that the Corn Law, as it stood, was capable of improvement. The working of the sliding scale of 1828[6] was injurious to the consumer, because it kept back corn until it was dearer; to the revenue, by the forced reduction of duty; to the agriculturist, by withholding corn until it reached the highest price, which was then suddenly snatched from him, and his protection defeated; and to commerce, because it introduced paralysing uncertainty. How then ought the Corn Law to be improved? Not by changing a variable into a fixed duty, because a fixed duty could not bear the strain of a time of scarcity and distress, and could not be permanent. It must be by modifying the existing principle of a duty varying inversely with the price. Now what was the price which would encourage the home-growth of corn? On the whole it was for the interest of the agriculturist that the price of wheat, allowing for its natural oscillations, should range between fifty-four and fifty-eight shillings. The legislature could not guarantee that or any other price, but the scale might best be constructed with a view to this range of prices. What he proposed, then, was a new scale, considerably decreasing the protection hitherto afforded to the home-grower.[7]

[6] See above pp. 165-6.

[7] As this became the Corn Law denounced by Cobden during the agitation from 1842 to 1846, it is well to describe the difference between the new scale and that of the Act of 1828 in Peel's own words:—"When corn is at 59*s.* and under 60*s.*, the duty at present is 27*s.* 8*d.* When corn is between those prices, the duty I propose is 13*s.* When the price of corn is at 50*s.* the existing duty is 36*s.* 8*d.*, increasing as the price falls; instead of which I

1842. Peel concluded a long exposition with a statement of those
ÆT. 38. general ideas about an economic and national system, on which his proposals rested. They were these. It is of the highest importance to the welfare of all classes in this country, that care should be taken that the main sources of your supply of corn should be derived from domestic agriculture. The additional price which you may pay in effecting that object, cannot be vindicated as a bonus or premium to agriculture, but only on the ground of its being advantageous to the country at large. The agriculturist has special burdens, and you are entitled to place such a price on foreign corn as is equivalent to these special burdens. Any additional protection to them can only be vindicated on the ground that it is for the interest of the country generally. And it is for the interest of all classes that we should be paying occasionally a small additional sum upon our own domestic produce, in order that we may thereby establish a security and insurance against the calamities that would ensue if we became altogether, or in a great part, dependent upon foreign countries for our supply.[8]

When the Minister sat down, Lord John Russell said a few formal words, and Peel added some explanation which took a moment or two. Cobden, according to a hostile reporter, had been "looking very lachrymose all the evening," and he now rose—it is interesting to notice contemporary estimates of important men whose importance has not yet been stamped—"for the purpose of inflicting one of his stereotyped harangues on the House." He did not

propose, when corn is at 50*s*., that the duty shall only be 20*s*., and that that duty shall in no case be exceeded. (Hear, hear.) At 56*s*. the existing duty is 30*s*. 8*d*.; the duty I propose at that price is 16*s*. At 60*s*. the existing duty is 26*s*. 8*d*.; the duty I propose at that price is 12*s*. At 63*s*. the existing duty is 23*s*. 8*d*.; the duty I propose is 9*s*. At 64*s*. the existing duty is 22*s*. 8*d*.; the duty I propose is 8*s*. At 70*s*. the existing duty is 10*s*. 8*d*.; the duty I propose is 5*s*."

[8] February 9, 1842.

do this, but he wound up the proceedings by a short and vehement declaration that he could not allow a moment to pass in denouncing the proposed measure as a bitter insult to a suffering nation. 1842. Ætat. 38.

Cobden's reception of the Ministerial plan was loudly re-echoed in the north of England. The news of the retention of the sliding scale was received with angry disgust throughout the manufacturing districts. Thousands of petitions, with hundreds of thousands of signatures, were sent up to Cobden and other members to lay before Parliament. The ordinary places of public meeting were not large enough to hold the thousands of exasperated men, who had just found from the newspapers that the Government would not give way. In cold and rain they assembled in the open spaces of their towns to listen to speeches, and to pass resolutions, denouncing Sir Robert Peel's measure as an insult and a mockery to a distressed population. The Prime Minister was formally accused of offering indignity and contempt to the working classes; of sacrificing the rights of the poor to the selfish interests of an unfeeling and avaricious aristocracy; of creating wealth, luxury, and splendour for a class, out of the abject misery of the millions. His effigy was carried on gibbets in contumely through the streets of towns like Stockport and Rochdale, to the sound of drums and fifes, and then, amid the execration of multitudes, hurled into the flames. In some places the fierce ceremony was preceded by a mock trial, in which the criminal was swiftly condemned, sentenced, and thrown into the bonfire as a traitor to his country, while the crowd shouted their prayer that so might all oppressors of the people perish.

Considering Cobden's untiring promptitude in seizing every occasion of enforcing his cause upon the House, it is odd that he should not have spoken in the debate in which

1842. the new plan was most directly under discussion. The debate
ÆT. 38. ended in a majority for the Minister of one hundred and twenty-three. Mr. Villiers, however, with the judicious neglect of tact that is always so provoking to neutrals, and without which no unpopular cause ever prospers, immediately after the House had decided that corn should be subject to a variable and not a fixed duty, proceeded to invite the same House to decide that it should be subject to no duty at all (Feb. 18). The first debate had lasted for four nights, and the second upon the same topics now lasted for five more. On the last of them (Feb. 24) Cobden made his speech.[1] He dealt with the main propositions which Peel had laid down as the defence of the new Bill. The Minister had confessed, and he now repeated it in reply to a direct challenge, that it was impossible to fix the price of food by legislative enactment. Then for what were they legislating? At least to keep up the price of food. Why not try in the same way to keep up the price of cottons, woollens, and silks? The fact that they did not try this, was the simple and open avowal that they were met there to legislate for a class, against the people. The price of cotton had fallen thirty per cent. in ten years, and the price of ironmongery had fallen as much. Yet the ironmonger was forced to exchange his goods with the agriculturist for the produce of the land, at the present high price of corn. Was this fair and reasonable? Could it be called legislation at all? Assuredly it was not honest legislation. Why should there not be a sliding scale for wages? If they admitted that wages could not be artificially sustained at a certain price, why should a law be passed to keep up the price of wheat? But the land, they said, was subject to heavy burdens. For every one special burden, he could show ten special exemptions. Even

[1] *Cobden's Speeches*, Mr. Rogers's edition. Vol. i. 15—28. [Edition of 1870.]

if the exclusive burdens on land were proved, the proper remedy was to remove them, and not to tax the food of the people. 1842. ÆT. 38.

An excellent point was made by the exposure of the fallacy, that low wages are the same thing as cheap labour. And this proved to be of the highest importance, as an element in Sir Robert Peel's conversion. He admitted afterwards that he had accepted this fallacy without proper examination, and that its overthrow was one of the things which most powerfully affected his opinions on a protective system. Apart from his general demonstration of the truth in this respect, Cobden now showed that the highly paid labour of England was proved to be the cheapest labour in the world. The manufacturers might have credit for taking a more enlightened view of their own interest than to suppose that the impoverishment of the multitude—the great consumers of all that they produce—could ever tend to promote the prosperity of the manufacturers. "I will tell the House, that by deteriorating the population, of which they ought to be so proud, they will run the risk of spoiling, not merely the animal, but the intellectual creature. It is not a potato-fed race that will ever lead the way in arts, arms, or commerce."

In the course of his speech, which was not in the strong vein that greater experience soon made easy to him, Cobden had talked of the ignorance on the question which prevailed among the Tory members. "Yes," he exclaimed, when his adversaries cried out against this vigorous thrust, "I have never seen their ignorance equalled among any equal number of working men in the north of England." And he reminded them that when the Corn Law of 1815 was passed, and when eminent men of both parties honestly thought that wages followed the price of corn, the great multitude of the nation, without the aid of learning, "with that intuitive saga-

1842. Æt. 38.

city which had given rise to the adage, 'The voice of the people is the voice of God,'" foresaw what the effect of the measure would be upon wages, and from 1815 to 1819 there never was a great public meeting at Manchester at which there was not some banner inscribed with the words, *No Corn Laws.*

For these taunts, the House took a speedy revenge. When Cobden sat down, the benches were crowded, and the member for Knaresborough got up. In a speech ten days before, Mr. Ferrand had said that the member for Stockport had during the last twelve years accumulated half a million of money; and that when night after night, during the last session, he was asserting that the Corn Laws had ruined the trade in Lancashire, he was actually at that very time running his works both night and day. This was only one item in a gross and violent attack on the whole class of northern manufacturers. He now returned to the charge with greater excitement than before. He quoted a great number of instances, where the system of truck was forced upon the helpless workmen. The artisans, he said, were compelled to live in cottages belonging to the employer, and to pay rent higher by one-tenth than their proper value. They were poisoned by the vile rags and devil's dust with which they had to work, and which the masters used for the fraudulent adulteration of their cloths. As for scarcity of flour, it arose from the consumption of that article by the manufacturers, in a paste with which they dishonestly daubed the face of their calicoes.

The country gentlemen shouted with exultation. They were ill qualified to judge the worth of these extravagant denunciations. The towns of Lancashire were more unfamiliar to them in those days than Denver or Omaha are in our own, and any atrocity was credible of those who lived and worked within them. The whole conception of modern

manufacturing industry was as horrible as it was strange in their eyes. We have already seen Sir James Graham's description of them as more cruel than the icy wastes of Siberia, or the burning shores of Mauritius. The chief newspaper of the country party boldly declared that England would be as great and powerful, and all useful Englishmen would be as rich as they are, though all the manufacturing houses in Great Britain should be engulfed in ruin. The same paper pleased the taste of its subscribers by saying that there was not a single mill-owner who would not compound for the destruction of all the manufacturing industry of England, on condition that during that period he should have full work and high profits for his mill, capital, and credit.[1] It is no exaggeration to say that by the majority of the Parliament of 1841, the cotton-spinners of the north were regarded with the same abhorrence as was common twenty years ago towards such representatives of Trade Unionism as were discovered in Sheffield.

Cobden was not cowed by the furious scene. Amid cries of "explain," he rose to tell the House very quietly, that it was not his mission to indulge in gross personalities. He assured the members who desired a partisan warfare of this kind, that nothing should drive him into a personal altercation; and he considered the dignity of the House in some danger when he found language such as they had been listening to for the last half-hour, received with so much complacency by the Ministers, and with such cheers by the party at their back.

There was violent irritation among his friends at the attack on him and their class, caused less by the exaggeration of the attack itself, than by the exultant spirit in which it was received by the House. Neighbours in Lancashire

[1] Quoted in Prentice's *History of the League*, i. 284.

1842. came forward to testify that both at Sabden and at Crosse
ÆT. 38. Hall he had set up a school, a library, and a news-room for the benefit of old and young in his employ; that the workmen of his district were eager for a place in his works; and that to no one did Mr. Ferrand's remarks apply with less truth than to Cobden and his partners for the last ten years. Cobden cared little for what had been said about him, but he seems to have felt some dissatisfaction with the momentary hesitation of the League as to the larger question of the new law. He wrote to his brother:—

"You never witnessed such a scene as that in the House of Commons when Ferrand was speaking the other night. The Tories were literally frantic with delight. Every sentence he uttered was caught up and cheered by a large majority, far more vehemently than anything that ever fell from Peel or Macaulay. It was not ironical cheering, but downright hearty approbation. I have not the least doubt that the M.P. for Knaresborough spoke the honest convictions of a majority of the members present. The exhibition was premeditated and got up for the occasion. I was told several days before at the club that Ferrand was to follow me in the debate. He was *planted* (to use a vulgar phrase) upon me by his party. I finished speaking at about a quarter-past eleven, and it was remarked by two or three on our side that just before I sat down, Sir George Clerk of the Treasury went and whispered to Green, the chairman of committee, and directed his eye towards Ferrand, so that notwithstanding that others tried to follow me, he called straight for the Knaresborough hero. Away he went with the attitudes of a prize-fighter, and the voice of a bull. . . . . Just at the time when I was speaking the members swarmed into the House from the dinner-tables, and they were in a right state for supporting Master Ferrand. Colonel S—— plied the fellow with oranges to suck, in an affectionate way that

resembled a monkey fondling a bear. What do your Tories think of their party in the House? I find that nothing seems to be considered so decided a stigma, as to brand a man as a mill-owner. Thus you see that the charge against me of working a *mill* at night would not be given up, even although it was proved to be a print works. I hope Ferrand by getting rope enough will settle himself soon. Tory praise will soon carry him off his legs. 1842. Ær. 38.

"From all that I hear, your people in Lancashire seem to be swayed to and fro like the grass by a summer's wind, without any particular progress. I suppose it will settle down into more quiet work in the way of tracts and lectures. I should like to have carried it by a *coup*, but that is not possible. It seems generally admitted up here by all parties that it is now only a question of time. Lord Lowther said to a friend of Villiers the other day, after the division of ninety, that he did not think it would take more than three years to *abolish* the Corn Laws; and Rawson and I were taking tea at Bellamy's, when a party of Tory members at another table agreed that it would come to a 5*s*. fixed duty in about three years. The Tories have not liked the debate. Peel feels that he has not come out of it well. He looks dissatisfied with himself, and I am told he is not in good health. What will he be by the end of the session?"[1]

The truth seems to be that the Leaguers, in spite of their moderate expectations, were taken aback by the heavy blow which the Minister had just dealt them. They had hoped against hope, and had been too full of faith in their own arguments to doubt their effect upon others. The ways of parliaments were as strange to them, as the ways of mill-owners were to the House of Commons. For a single moment they were staggered; Cobden was for an instant or two fired by a violent impulse, which soon, however, yielded

[1] *To F. Cobden*, Feb. 28, 1842.

1842. Æt. 38.

to his usual good sense. "I feel some little difficulty," he wrote to Mr. George Wilson, "in offering my advice as to the course which the League should henceforth pursue. That course depends very much upon the spirit of the people who are acting with us. If they were all of my temper in the matter, we would soon bring it to an issue. I presume, however, that your friends are not up to the mark for a general *fiscal revolt*, and I know of no other plan of peaceful resistance. The question is, then as to the plan of agitation for the future. The idea of ever petitioning the present House of Commons again upon the Corn Laws should be publicly renounced. It involves great trouble and expense, and will do no good. If we had another election, the case would be different, but there is no use in petitioning the present House. I think our lecturers should be thrown upon the boroughs, particularly in the rural districts where we have been opposed. A well prepared account should be taken of the state of all the boroughs in the kingdom in reference to our question. They should be classified, and put into lists of *safe, tolerably safe, doubtful, desperate, hopeless*. Our whole strength should be then thrown upon the doubtfuls. Electoral Committees should be formed in each borough to look after the registration, and we ought, if needful, to incur some expenditure in this department. Much will depend on our getting a good working Committee in every borough to look after the register, and to agitate our question.

"Now as respects any great demonstration of *numbers* against the passing of the present law. It has been suggested that we ought to hold a meeting on Kersall Moor. But I presume that would be a joint Suffrage and Corn Law meeting, which would not aid our cause at present. The middle class must be still further pinched and disappointed before they will go to that. I quite agree with you that we

must keep the League as a body wholly distinct from the suffrage movement. But at the same time I think the more that individuals connected prominently with the League join the suffrage party the better. I shall take the first opportunity in the House of avowing myself for the suffrage to every man.

1842. Ær. 38.

"After all, I hardly entertain a hope that we shall effect our object by old and regular methods; accidents may aid us, but I do not see my way in the ordinary course of things to beating down the power of the aristocracy."[3]

Mr. Bright made various suggestions, and Cobden replied to them with provisional assent:—

"I am afraid you must not calculate on my attending at your tea-party. During the recess I shall have some private matters to attend to, and I shall endeavour to avoid public meetings as far as possible. I have been thinking of our future plans, and am more and more convinced of the necessity of keeping ourselves free from all other questions. I am much more of opinion upon reflection, of the necessity of some such bold demonstration in the way of organization and the securing a large fund, as you were alluding to. Something must be done to secure the ground, and thus prevent its being occupied by any other party. Nothing would so much attain that object as to get a large fund secured. I like the idea of an anti-Corn-Law *rent*. Unless some such demonstration of renewed life and resolution be made immediately after the passing of the Corn Law, it will be suspected that we are giving up the cause."[4]

Cobden seems to have cooled down to a sober view of the situation when he wrote to his brother, a fortnight after the affair of Mr. Ferrand:—

"There is a curious symptom breaking out in the Tory

[3] *To G. Wilson*, Feb. 27, 1842.
[4] *To Mr. Bright*, March 7, 1842.

1842. ranks. Several of the young aristocrats are evidently more
ÆT. 38. liberal than their leaders, and they have talked rationally about an ultimate Free Trade. I hear a good deal of this talk in the tea and dining-rooms. In fact the Tory aristocracy are liberals in *feeling*, compared with your genuine political bigot, a cotton-spinning Tory. I see no other course for us but a renewed agitation of the agricultural districts, where I expect there will be a good deal of discontent ere long. I mean in the small rural towns. Bad trade in the manufacturing towns will, I suspect, very soon convert the Tories, or break them, the next best thing."[1]

No new line of action was hit upon until the end of the session. In the meantime, so far as the agitation out of doors went, Cobden's mind was incessantly turning over plans for strengthening the connexions of the League. To Mr. Ashworth he wrote:—

"It has struck me that it would be well to try to engraft our Free Trade agitation upon the Peace movement. They are one and the same cause. It has often been to me a matter of the greatest surprise, that the Friends have not taken up the question of Free Trade as the means—and I believe the only human means—of effecting universal and permanent peace. The efforts of the Peace Societies, however laudable, can never be successful so long as the nations maintain their present system of isolation. The colonial system, with all its dazzling appeals to the passions of the people, can never be got rid of except by the indirect process of Free Trade, which will gradually and imperceptibly loose the bands which unite our Colonies to us by a mistaken notion of self-interest. Yet the Colonial policy of Europe has been the chief source of wars for the last hundred and fifty years. Again, Free Trade, by perfecting the intercourse, and

[1] *To F. Cobden*, March 10, 1842.

securing the dependence of countries one upon another, must inevitably snatch the power from the *governments* to plunge their people into wars. What do you think of changing your plan of a prize essay, from the Corn Law to 'Free Trade as the best human means for securing universal and permanent peace.' This would be a good and appropriate prize to be given by members of the Society of Friends. At all events, in any way possible I should like to see the London Friends interested in the question of the Corn Law and Free Trade. They have a good deal of influence over the City moneyed interest, which has the ear of the Government."*

Besides these tentative projects of new alliances, he watched vigilantly every chance of suggesting a point to his allies outside. To Mr. Bright he wrote :—

"If you have a leisure hour, I wish you would write an article upon the subject of the Queen's Letter to the parsons, ordering collections in the churches for the distressed. Here is a good opportunity for doing justice to the Dissenting ministers, who met last year to proclaim the miseries of the people, and to propose a better remedy than almsgiving. The Church clergy are almost to a man guilty of causing the present distress by upholding the Corn Law, they *having themselves an interest in the high price of bread,* and their present efforts must be viewed as tardy and inefficient, if not hypocritical.

"Again, show how futile it must be to try to subsist the manufacturing population upon charitable donations. The wages paid in the cotton trade alone amount to twenty millions a year. Reduce that amount even ten per cent., and how could it be made up by charity? If you have also leisure for another article, make a swingeing assault upon the last general election, and argue from the disclosures

* *To Henry Ashworth*, April 12, 1842.

1842. made by the House of Commons itself, that we the Anti-
ÆT. 38. Corn Law party were not defeated, but virtually swindled and plundered of our triumph at the hustings." [7]

With reference to the first of the two themes which is here suggested, Cobden always felt keenly the wrong part taken throughout the struggle by the clergy of the Establishment. The rector of the church which he was in the habit of attending, Saint John's, in Deansgate, appealed to him for help towards an Association for providing ten new churches in Manchester. Cobden in reply expressed his opinion of the project with wholesome frankness:—

"It will be always very gratifying to me to second your charitable efforts to relieve the distresses of our poor neighbours; and if I do not co-operate in the plan for benefitting the destitute population on a large scale by erecting ten new churches, it is only because, in the words of the appeal, I 'differ about the means to be adopted.' You, who visit the abodes of poverty, are aware that a great portion of the working population of Manchester are suffering from an insufficiency of wholesome nourishment. The first and most

[7] *To Mr. Bright*, May 12, 1842. In the following number of the *Anti-Bread-Tax Circular* (May 19), articles on the two subjects here suggested by Cobden, duly appeared. "The clergy of the establishment," says the writer, with good strong plainness of speech, "would do well to reflect upon their position in this matter. They have, with very few exceptions, upheld to the uttermost the unnatural system, which, after working during a period of twenty-seven years, causing more or less of suffering throughout the whole of its existence, has at length brought the nation to the verge of ruin. They have almost to a man been the ever-active agents and allies of the monopolist party, and their restless energy in the worst of causes has been mainly instrumental in carrying into office a Ministry whose only pledge was that the interests of the nation should be held subservient to the interests of the land and colonial monopolists . . . . We fear that any attempt to raise contributions from the clergy, or by their agency, can only subject that body to the charge of gross ignorance or gross hypocrisy. . . . . Their conduct contrasts strongly with the noble efforts of the Christian ministers who last year assembled in Manchester, in Carnarvon, and in Edinburgh, to declare their entire abhorrence of the unjust and murderous system by which multitudes of honest and industrious men are made to suffer wrongs more grievous than can easily be described."

pressing claim of the poor is for food: all other wants are secondary to this. It is in vain to try and elevate the moral and religious character of a people whose physical condition is degraded by the privation of the first necessaries of life; and hence we are taught to pray for 'our daily bread' before spiritual graces. There is a legislative enactment which prevents the poor of this town from obtaining a sufficiency of wholesome food, and I am sure the law only requires to be understood by our clergy to receive their unanimous condemnation. Surely a law of this kind, opposed alike to the laws of nature, the obvious dispensations of divine providence, and the revealed word of God, must be denounced by the ministers of the Gospel. So convinced am I that there is no other mode of raising the condition of the working classes in the scale of morality or religion, whilst they are denied by Act of Parliament a sufficiency of food, that I have set apart as much of my income as I can spare from other claims for the purpose of effecting the abolition of the Corn Law and Provision Law. Until this object be attained I shall be compelled to deny myself the satisfaction of contributing to other public undertakings of great importance in themselves, and secondary only to the first of all duties—*the feeding of the hungry*. It is for this reason that I am reluctantly obliged to decline to contribute to the fund for building ten new churches. My course is, I submit, in strict harmony with the example afforded us by the divine author of Christianity, who preached upon the mountain and in the desert, beneath no other roof than the canopy of heaven, and who yet, we are told, was careful to feed the multitude that flocked around him. You will, I am sure, excuse me troubling you at such length upon a subject which I conscientiously believe to be the most important in relation to the poor of any that can engage your attention."[1]

1842. Æt. 38.

[1] February, 1841.

CHAPTER XI.

SIR ROBERT PEEL'S NEW POLICY.

1842. THE new Corn Bill was the first of three acts in the great ÆT. 38. drama which Peel now unfolded to Parliament and the nation. Things looked as if the country were slowly sinking into decay. The revenue, which had been exhibiting deficits for several years, now fell short of the expenditure for the year current by two millions and a half. The working classes all over the land were suffering severe and undeniable distress. Population had increased to an extent at which it seemed no longer possible to find employment for them. To invite all the world to become our customers, by opening our ports to their products in exchange, was the Manchester remedy. It would bring both work and food. The Prime Minister believed that the revenue could be repaired, and the springs of industry relieved, without that great change in our economic policy. But he knew that the crisis was too deep for half-measures, and he produced by far the most momentous budget of the century.

The Report of the Committee of 1840 on Import Duties was, as I have already mentioned, the starting-point of the revolution to which Peel now proceeded. It passed a strong condemnation on the existing tariff, as presenting neither congruity nor unity of purpose, and conforming to no general principles. Eleven hundred and fifty rates of duty were enumerated as chargeable on imported articles, and all

other articles paid duty as unenumerated. In some cases the duties levied were simple and comprehensive; in others they fell into vexatious and embarrassing details. The tariff often aimed at incompatible ends. A duty was imposed both for revenue and protection, and then was pitched so high for the sake of protection as to produce little or nothing to revenue. A great variety of particular interests were protected, to the detriment of the public income, as well as of commercial intercourse with other countries. The same preference was extended by means of discriminating duties to the produce of the colonies; great advantages were given to the colonial interests at the expense of the consumers in the mother country.

It was pointed out that the effect of prohibitory duties was to impose on the consumer an indirect tax often equal to the whole difference of price between the British article and the foreign article which the duty kept out. On articles of food alone the amount taken in this way from the consumer exceeded the amount of all the other taxes levied by the Government. The sacrifices of the community did not end here, but were accompanied by injurious effects upon wages and capital. The duties diminished greatly the productive powers of the country; and they limited our trade. The action of duties which were not prohibitory, but only protective, was of a similar kind. They imposed upon the consumer a tax equal to the amount of the duty levied on the foreign article; but it was a tax which went not to the public treasury, but to the protected manufacturer.

Evidence was taken to show that the protective system was not on the whole beneficial to the protected manufactures themselves. The amount of duties levied on the plea of protection to British manufactures did not exceed half a million sterling. Some even of the manufacturers supposed

1842. to be most interested in retaining the duties, were quite
ÆT. 38. willing that they should be abolished.

With reference to the influence of the protective system on wages, and on the condition of the labourer, the Report was equally decided. As the pressure of foreign competition was heaviest on those articles in the production of which the rate of wages was lowest, so it was obvious in a country exporting so largely as England, that other advantages might more than compensate for an apparent advantage in the money price of labour. The countries in which the rate of wages is lowest, are not always those which manufacture most successfully. The Committee was persuaded that the best service that could be rendered to the industrious classes of the community, would be to extend the field of labour by an extension of our commerce.

The conclusion was a strong conviction in the minds of the Committee, of the necessity of an immediate change in the import duties of the kingdom. By imposts on a small number of those articles which were then most productive[1] —the amount of each impost being carefully considered with a view to the greatest consumption of the article, and therefore the highest receipts at the customs—the revenue would not only suffer no loss, but would be considerably augmented.[2]

This Report was the charter of Free Trade. The Whig

[1] Seventeen articles produced $94\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the total revenue, and these with twenty-nine other articles, or forty-six articles in all, produced $98\frac{3}{4}$ per cent.

[2] Much of the evidence which led to this Report is, in the present recrudescence of bad opinions, as well worth reading to-day as it was forty years ago—especially the evidence of Mr. J. Deacon Hume, who is not to be confused, by the way, with Joseph Hume, the chairman of the Committee. Cobden said that if the Committee had done nothing else but elicit this evidence, "it would have been sufficient to produce a commercial revolution all over the world." Mr. Hume's answers were largely circulated as one of the League tracts. This important blue-book, *Import Duties*, No. 601, was ordered to be printed, Aug. 6, 1840.

Government, as we have seen, had taken from it in a timid and blundering way a weapon or two, with which they hoped that they might be able to defend their places. Their successor grasped its principles with the hand of a master. "My own conviction," said Cobden many years afterwards, "is that Peel was always a Free Trader in theory; in fact, on all politico-economical questions, he was always as sound in the abstract as Adam Smith or Bentham. For he was peculiarly a politico-economical, and not a Protectionist, intellect. But he never believed that absolute Free Trade came within the category of practical House of Commons measures. It was a question of numbers with him; and as he was yoked with a majority of inferior animals, he was obliged to go their pace, and not his own."[3]

This is true of Sir Robert Peel's mind throughout from 1843 to 1846. But it seems only to be partially true of the moment when he brought in the great budget of 1842. Notwithstanding its fatal omission of the duties on corn, it was a Free Trade budget. Corn was excluded partly from the leader's fear of the "inferior animals" whom it was his honourable but unhappy mission to drive, but partly also by an honest doubt in Peel's own mind, whether it was safe to depend on foreign countries for our supplies. The doubt was strong enough to warrant him, from his own point of view, in trying an experiment before meddling with corn; and a magnificent experiment it was. The financial plan of 1842 was the beginning of all the great things that have been done since. Its cardinal point was the imposition of a direct tax, in order to relax the commercial tariff. Ultimately the effect of diminishing duties was to increase revenue, but the first effect was a fall in revenue. It was expedient or indispensable for the revival of trade to lower or remit duties, and to purge the tariff. To bridge over the interval before

[3] *To J. Parkes*, May 26, 1856.

1842. increased trade and consumption made up for the loss thus
ÆT. 38. incurred, the Government proposed to put on the income tax at the rate of sevenpence in the pound. They expected that the duration of the impost would probably be about five years. At the end of that time the loss caused by remissions would, they hoped, have been recovered.

The new tariff was not laid before Parliament for some weeks.[4] The labour of preparation was enormous. Mr. Gladstone, who was then at the Board of Trade, and on whom much of the labour fell, said many years afterwards that he had been concerned in four revisions of the Tariff, namely in 1842, in 1845, in 1854, and in 1860; and he told Cobden that the first cost six times as much trouble as all the others put together. There was an abatement of duty on seven hundred and fifty articles. The object, as set forth by the Minister himself, speaking generally, was, to reduce the duties on raw materials, which constituted the elements of manufactures, to an almost nominal amount; to reduce the duties on half-manufactured articles, which entered almost as much as raw material into domestic manufactures, to a nominal amount. In articles completely manufactured, their object had been to remove prohibitions and reduce prohibitory duties, so as to enable the foreign producer to compete fairly with the domestic manufacturer. The general principle Sir Robert Peel went upon, was to make a considerable reduction in the cost of living. It is true that the duty on the importation of fresh and salted meat was lowered. It is true, too, that he could point to the new Corn Bill as having reduced the duty on wheat by more than a half. While he spoke, it was nine shillings under the new law, and twenty-three under the old one. But the sugar duties were untouched. It seemed a fatal, absurd,

[4] The speech proposing the Income Tax was March 11. It was May 5 when Sir Robert Peel moved to go into Committee on the Tariff.

miserable flaw in the new scheme to talk of the main object 1842.
being to lessen the charge of living, and then to leave bread ÆT. 38.
and sugar, two great articles of universal consumption, burdened with heavy protective taxation. Many a League meeting in the next three years rang with fierce laughter at the expense of a Minister who talked of relieving the consumer, when he had taken the tax off dried fruits, cosmetics, satins, caviare, and left it upon the loaf of bread.

The Tories followed reluctantly. The more acute among the Protectionists felt that the colonial interest would speedily be forced to surrender its advantage over the sugar of Cuba and Brazil; and one member warned sympathetic hearers that, when the Tariff was passed, the next step to be expected was the repeal of the Corn Laws. The Minister found one remarkable champion on his own side, whose genius he failed to recognize. Mr. Disraeli laughed at the Whigs for pretending to be the originators of Free Trade. It was Mr. Pitt, he said, who first promulgated its doctrines; and it was Fox, Burke, and Sheridan who then denounced the new commercial principles. The principles of Free Trade were developed, and not by Whigs, fifty years before; and the conduct now pursued by Sir Robert Peel was in exact accordance and consistency with the principles for the first time promulgated by Mr. Pitt. So far as it went, Mr. Disraeli's contention was perfectly correct.

If the Protectionists were puzzled as well as annoyed by the new policy, so were the Free Traders. The following extracts from letters to his brother convey one or two of Cobden's earlier impressions about Peel. Of the measure he always thought the same, and the worst. By the end of the session Cobden had clearly discerned whither Peel's mind was turning. We who live a generation after the battle was won, may feel for a moment disappointed that Cobden did not at once

1842. judge the Minister's boldness in imposing the income tax as
ÆT. 38. a means of reforming the tariff, in a more appreciative spirit. It is just, however, to remember that in his letters we seize the first quick impressions of the hour; that these first impressions were naturally those of chagrin in one who saw that the new scheme, however good in its general bearings, omitted the one particular change that was needful. We must not expect from an energetic and clear-sighted actor, committed to an urgent practical cause, the dispassionateness of a historian whose privilege it is to be wise after the event.

"What say the wise men to Sir Robert's income tax? In other words, how do our mill-owners and shopkeepers like to be made to pay 1,200,000*l.* a year out of their profits, to insure the continuance of the corn and sugar monopolies? I should think that the proposal to place profits upon a par with rent before the tax collector will not be vastly popular, unless the law can contrive to keep up the former as it does the latter. The only important change after all, announced last night, was timber. . . . Peel delivered his statement in a clear and clever way, never faltering nor missing a word in nearly a four hours' speech. This has gone far to convince our noodles on the Whig side that there is a great deal of good in his budget; and I find even our friend J—— is inclined to praise the budget. But I fully expect that it will do much to render Peel vastly unpopular with the upper portion of the middle class, who will see no compensation in the tariff for a tax upon their incomes and profits. If this be the result of the measure, it will do good to the Corn Law cause, by bringing the discontented to our ranks. Let me know what your wiseacres say about it."[1]

"Both the corn and income tax will be thrown over Easter

[1] *To F. Cobden*, March 12, 1842.

I expect. Peel is very anxious to force on both measures, which I am not surprised at, seeing how he is badgered both in the House and out of doors. He gets at times very irritable, as you will have seen. It is a hard task to govern for a class, under the pretence of governing for the people. If he should be killed in the vain attempt to serve two such opposite masters, it is to be hoped he will be the last man foolish enough to make the attempt. He is certainly looking very fagged and jaded. The income tax will do more than the Corn Law to destroy the Tories. The class of voters in the towns upon which they rely, are especially touched by his schemes. The genteel shopkeepers and professional men who depend upon appearances, and live by a false external, will never forgive him for exposing their tinsel. You will not hear of any public demonstration against the tax, but a much more effective resistance is being offered by the private remonstrance of Tory voters. There is very little feeling in the manufacturing districts compared with that of the southern boroughs. Peel is also undermining his strength in the counties by displeasing everybody, and putting everything in disorder without settling anything. The worst danger is of the Whigs coming in again too soon. The hacks would be up on their hind legs, and at their old prancing tricks again, immediately they smelt the Treasury crib."*

"The truth is, your accounts make me feel very uneasy at my position. No earthly good can I do here. The thing must be allowed to work itself into some new shape—time only can tell what.. We are *nowhere* on the opposition side at present. Peel must head a milieu party soon. If the old Duke were dead, he would quarrel with the ultra-Tories in a month. He is no more with them in heart than you or

* *To F. Cobden*, March 22, 1842.

1842. I, and I suspect there is now an accumulation of grudges
ÆT. 38. between him and the more violent of his party, that can hardly be suppressed."[7]

"Peel is a Free-trader, and so are Ripon and Gladstone. The last was put in by the Puseyites, who thought they had insinuated the wedge, but they now complain that he has been quite absorbed by Peel, which is the fact. Gladstone makes a very clever aide-de-camp to Peel, but is nothing without him. The Government are at their wits' end about the state of the country. The Devonshire House Whigs are beginning to talk of the necessity of supporting the Government in case of any serious troubles, which means a virtual coalition; a point they are evidently being driven to by the force of events. Peel will throw overboard the bigots of his party, if he have the chance. But the real difficulty is the present state of the country. The accounts from every part are equally bad, and Chadwick says the poor-rates in the agricultural districts are rising rapidly. A great deal of land has been offered for sale during the last three months, and everything seems working beautifully for a cure in the only possible way, viz., distress, suffering, and want of money. I am most anxious to get away and come to Manchester; I know the necessity of my presence, and shall let nothing but the corn question keep me."[8]

"The last fortnight has done more to advance our cause than the last six or twelve months. The Peel party are fairly beaten in argument, and for the first time they are willing to listen to us as if they were anxious to learn excuses for their inevitable conversion. If I were disposed to be vain of my talk, I have had good reason, for both sides

[7] *To F. Cobden*, April 11, 1842.
[8] *To F. Cobden*, June 22, 1842.

speak in praise of my two last efforts. The Reform and Carlton Clubs are both agreed as to my having pleaded the cause successfully. The real secret, however, is the irresistible pressure of the times, and the consciousness that the party in power can only exist by restoring the country to something like prosperity. If nothing happens to revive trade, the Corn Law goes to a certainty before spring."[9] 1842. ÆT. 38.

"Peel and his squad will be right glad to get rid of the House, and I suspect it will not be his fault if he does not get a measure of Corn Law repeal ready before next session, to stop the mouths of the League men. He has been excessively worried by *our* clique in the House, and I have reason to flatter myself with the notion that I have been a frequent thorn in his side. If distress should continue to favour us, we shall get something substantial in another twelve months, and I suspect we may bargain for the continuance of bad trade for that length of time at least."[10]

Something must be said of the two speeches of which Cobden speaks so lightly in one of these extracts. It was July before he made any prominent attack on the financial scheme. In March, when Peel had wished to press the Income Tax Bill forwards, Cobden had been one of a small group who persisted in obstructive motions for adjournment, until Peel was at length forced to give way. He had also made remarks from time to time in Committee. But the session was far advanced before he found a proper occasion for putting forward all the strength of his case.

On July 1 a great debate was opened by Mr. Wallace of Greenock, upon the distress of the country. Mr. Disraeli pointed out, with much force and ingenuity, that the languid

[9] *To F. Cobden*, July 14, 1842.
[10] *To F. Cobden*, July 20, 1842.

1842. trade from which they were suffering would receive a far
ÆT. 38. more powerful stimulus than the repeal of the Corn Laws could give, if Lord Palmerston had not, by a mischievous political treaty, put an end to a treaty of commerce with France, which would have opened new markets for all the most heavily stricken industries of England. Joseph Hume urged that the Government should either agree to an inquiry, or else adopt the remedy of a repeal of the Corn Laws. Lord John Russell lamented the postponement of remedies, but would leave to the Government the responsibility of choosing their own time. The Prime Minister followed in a speech in which he confined himself to very narrow ground. It was rather a defence of his financial policy, than a serious recognition of the state of the country.

This provoked Cobden to make his first great speech in the House (July 8). Mr. Roebuck, who spoke the same evening, described it as "a speech fraught with more melancholy instruction than it had ever been his lot to hear. A speech, in the incidents which it unfolded, more deeply interesting to the people of this country, he had never heard in his life; and these incidents were set forth with great ability and great simplicity." As a debating reply to the Prime Minister, it was of consummate force and vivacity. The facts which Cobden adduced supported his vigorous charge that Peel viewed the matter too narrowly, and that circumstances were more urgent than he had chosen to admit. It was exactly one of those speeches which the House of Commons naturally delights in. It contained not a single waste sentence. Every one of Peel's arguments was met by detail and circumstance, and yet detail and circumstance the most minute were kept alive by a stream of eager and onpressing conviction. Peel had compared the consumption of cotton in two half-years; Cobden showed that for purposes of comparison they were the wrong half-years. Peel had

talked of improved machinery for a time turning people out of employment; Cobden proved with chapter and verse how gradual the improvement in the power-looms had been, and pointed out that Manchester, Bolton, Stockport, and other towns in the north, were really the creation of labour-saving machines. Peel had spoken as if it were merely a cotton question and a Manchester question: Cobden, out of the fulness of his knowledge, showed that the stocking-frames of Nottingham were as idle as the looms of Stockport, that the glass-cutters of Stourbridge and the glovers of Yeovil were undergoing the same privation as the potters of Stoke and the miners of Staffordshire, where five-and-twenty thousand were destitute of employment. He knew of a place where a hundred wedding-rings had been pawned in a single week to provide bread; and of another place where men and women subsisted on boiled nettles, and dug up the decayed carcase of a cow rather than perish of hunger. "I say you are drifting to confusion," he exclaimed, "without rudder and without compass. . . . . Those who are so fond of laughing at political economy forget that they have a political economy of their own: and what is it? That they will monopolize to themselves the fruit of the industry of the great body of the community—that they allow the productions of the spindle and the loom to go abroad to furnish them with luxuries from the farthest corners of the world, but refuse to permit to be brought back in exchange what would minister to the wants and comforts of the lower orders. What would the consequence be? We are sowing the seeds broadcast for a plentiful harvest of workmen in the western world. Thousands of workmen are delving in the mines of the western continent, where coals can be raised for a shilling a ton. We are sending there the labourers from our cotton manufactories, from our woollen, and from our silk. They are

1842. Ær. 38. not going by dozens or by scores to teach the people of other countries the work they have learnt—they are going in hundreds and thousands to those states to open works against our own machines, and to bring this country to a worse state than it is now in. There is nothing to atone for a system which leads to this; and if I were to seek for a parallel, it would be only in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV., or the decree of Alva in Belgium, where the best men were banished from their country."

Cobden gave additional strength to his appeal by showing that its eagerness was not due to a merely official partisanship. He saw no reason, he declared, why they should not take good measures from Sir Robert Peel, or why they should prefer those of Lord John Russell. "The noble Lord is called the leader on this side of the House, and I confess that when I first came into the House I was inclined to look upon him as a leader; but from what I have seen, I believe the right hon. Baronet to be as liberal as the noble Lord. If the noble lord is my leader, I can only say that I believe that in four out of five divisions I have voted against him. He must be an odd kind of leader who thus votes against those he leads. I will take measures of relief from the right hon. Baronet as well as from the noble Lord, but upon some measure of relief I will insist. . . . . I give the Prime Minister credit for the difficulties of his situation; but this question must be met, and met fully; it must not be quibbled away; it must not be looked upon as a Manchester question; the whole condition of the country must be looked at and faced, and it must be done before we separate this session."

Three nights later (July 11), Sir Robert Peel took occasion to deal with some of Cobden's economic propositions, especially an assertion that in prosperous times improvements in machinery do not tend to throw labourers out of employ-

ment. At the close of his speech the Minister revealed the 1842.
tentative spirit in which his great measures had been Æt. 38.
framed, and the half-open mind in which he was beginning to stand towards the Corn Law. If these measures should not prove adequate to meet the distress of the country, in that case, he said, "I shall be the first to admit that no adherence to former opinions ought to prevent their full and careful revision."

Cobden, in the course of a vigorous reply, pointed to a historic parallel which truly described the political situation. He warned the aristocracy and the landowners never to expect to find another Prime Minister who would take office to uphold their monopoly. "They had killed Canning by thwarting him, and they would visit the same fate on their present leader, if he persevered in the same attempt to govern for the aristocracy, while professing to govern for the people." At this there were loud groans from some parts of the House. "Yes," repeated Cobden, undaunted, "they had killed Canning by forcing him to try and reconcile their interests with those of the people, and no human power could enable the right hon. Baronet to survive the same ordeal."

CHAPTER XII.

RENEWED ACTIVITY OF THE LEAGUE—COBDEN AND SIR ROBERT PEEL—RURAL CAMPAIGN.

1842. Æt. 38.

At the close of the session, Cobden hastened back to Manchester, where his business, as he too well knew, urgently required his presence. As we have seen, his brother's letters had begun to make him seriously uneasy as to his position. Affairs were already beginning to fall into disorder at Chorley and in Manchester, and in telling the story of Cobden's public activity, we have to remember that almost from the moment of entering Parliament he began to be harassed by private anxieties of a kind which depress and unnerve most men more fatally than any other. Cobden's buoyant enthusiasm for his cause carried him forward; it drove these haunting cares into the background, and his real life was not in his business, but in the affairs of the nation.

In September he made an important speech to the Council of the League, at Manchester. It explains their relations to political parties, and to social classes. They had been lately charged, he said, with having been in collision with the Chartist party. But those who made this charge had themselves been working for the last three years to excite the Chartist party against the League, and that, too, by means that were not over-creditable. These intriguers had succeeded in deluding a considerable portion of the working classes upon the subject of the Corn Laws.

"And I have no objection in admitting here," Cobden went on to say, "as I have admitted frankly before, that these artifices and manœuvres have, to a considerable extent, compelled us to make our agitation a middle-class agitation. I do not deny that the working classes generally have attended our lectures and signed our petitions; but I will admit, that so far as the fervour and efficiency of our agitation has gone, it has eminently been a middle-class agitation. We have carried it on by those means by which the middle class usually carries on its movements. We have had our meetings of dissenting ministers; we have obtained the co-operation of the ladies; we have resorted to tea-parties, and taken those pacific means for carrying out our views, which mark us rather as a middle-class set of agitators. . . . We are no political body; we have refused to be bought by the Tories; we have kept aloof from the Whigs; and we will not join partnership with either Radicals or Chartists, but we hold out our hand ready to give it to all who are willing to advocate the total and immediate repeal of the corn and provision laws."

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In another speech, he said the great mass of the people stuck to the bread-tax because it was the law. "He did not charge the great body of the working classes with taking part against the repeal of the Corn Laws, but he charged the great body of the intelligent mechanics with standing aloof, and allowing a parcel of lads, with hired knaves for leaders, to interrupt their meetings." As time went on, the share of the working class in the movement became more satisfactory. Meanwhile, it is important to notice that they held aloof, or else opposed it as interfering with those claims of their own to political power, which the Reform Act had so unexpectedly baulked.

Recovering themselves from the disappointment and con-

1842. fusion of the spring, the agitators applied themselves with
Æt. 38. invigorated resolution to their work.

They had been spending a hundred pounds a week. They ought now, said Cobden, to spend a thousand. Up to this time the Council of the League had had twenty-five thousand pounds through their hands, of which by far the larger portion had been raised in Manchester and the neighbouring district. About three times that sum had been raised and expended by local associations elsewhere. In all, therefore, a hundred thousand pounds had gone, and the Corn Laws seemed more immovable than ever. With admirable energy, the Council now made up their minds at once to raise a new fund of fifty thousand pounds, and, notwithstanding the terrible condition of the cotton trade, the amount was collected in a very short time. Men contributed freely because they knew that the rescue of their capital depended on the opening of markets from which the protection on corn excluded them.

"You will have observed," Cobden wrote to Mr. Edward Baines, "that the Council of the League are determined upon a renewed agitation upon a great scale, provided they can get a commensurate pecuniary help from the country, and my object in troubling you is to beg that you will endeavour to rouse the men of the West Riding to another effort.

"The scheme which we especially aim at carrying out is this:—To make an attack upon every registered elector of the kingdom, county and borough, by sending to each a packet of publications embracing the whole argument as it affects both the agricultural and trading view of the question. We are procuring the copies of the registers for the purpose. *But the plan involves an expense of* 20,000*l*. Add to this our increased expenditure in lectures, etc., and the contemplated cost of the spring deputations in

London, and we shall require 50,000*l.* to do justice to the cause before next June. And we have a Spartan band of men in Manchester who are setting to work in the full confidence that they will raise the money. The best way to levy contributions on the public for a common object is *to set up a claim*, and therefore Manchester men must not in public declare the country in their debt. But between ourselves this is the case to a large extent. The agitation, though a national one, and for national objects, has been sustained by the pockets of the people here to the extent of 10 to 1 against the whole kingdom!

"A vast proportion of our expenditure has been of a kind to bring no *éclat*, such as the wide distribution of tracts in the purely agricultural districts, and the subsidizing of literary talent which does not *appear* in connexion with the League. If I had the opportunity of a little gossip with you, I could give you proof of much efficient agitation for which the League does not get credit publicly. There is danger, however, in the growing adversity of this district, that we may pump our springs dry, and it is more and more necessary to widen the circle of our contributors. We confidently rely on your influential co-operation.

"Recollect that our primary object is to work the printing press, not upon productions of our own, but producing the *essence* of authoritative writers, such as Deacon Hume, Lord Fitzwilliam, etc., and scattering them broadcast over the land. Towards such an object no Free-trader can scruple to commit himself. And in no other human war that I am acquainted with, can we accomplish our end by moral and peaceable means. There is no use in blinking the real difficulties of our task, which is the education of twenty-seven millions of people, an object not to be accomplished except by the cordial assist-

1842. ance of the enlightened and patriotic in all parts of the
ÆT. 38. kingdom."[1]

The staff of lecturers was again despatched on its missionary errand. To each elector in the kingdom was sent a little library of tracts. Tea parties followed by meetings were found to be more attractive in the northern towns than meetings without tea parties. Places where meetings had been thinly attended, now produced crowds. Cobden, Mr. Bright, Mr. Ashworth, and the other chief speakers, again scoured the country north of the Trent; and at the end of the year, the first two of these, along with Colonel Perronet Thompson—the author of the famous *Catechism of the Corn Laws*, and styled by Cobden, the father of them all—proceeded on a pilgrimage to Scotland.

"Our progress ever since we crossed the border," Cobden writes, "has been gratifying in the extreme. Had we been disposed to encourage a display of enthusiasm, we might have frightened the more nervous of the monopolists with our demonstrations. As it is, we have been content to allow honours to be thrust upon us in our own persons, or rather mine, by the representatives of the people. Glasgow, Edinburgh, Kirkcaldy, Dundee, Perth, and Stirling, have all presented me with the freedom of their burghs, and I have no doubt I could have become a free citizen of every corporate town in Scotland by paying them a visit.[2] All this is due to the principles we advocate, for I have done all I could to discourage any personal compliments to myself. Scotland is fairly up now, and we shall have more in future from this side of the Tweed upon the Corn Law. We

[1] *To Edward Baines*, Oct. 25, 1842.

[2] It is worth noticing that in Glasgow this honour was conferred upon him, not merely on the ground of his public action, but because, in the words of his proposer, by his ingenuity as a calico printer, he had brought that manufacture to such a state of perfection that we were now able to compete with the printers of France and Switzerland.

go to-day to Glasgow to attend another Free-trade banquet. To-morrow we proceed to Edinburgh, where I shall remain a few days to go through the ceremony of becoming a citizen of Auld Reekie, and then go forward to Newcastle to join Colonel Thompson and Bright (who have both been working miracles), who will take Hawick by the way for a meeting on Thursday evening."[3]

"I shall be with you at the end of the week. The work has been too heavy for me, and I have been obliged to throw an extra share upon Bright and the old veteran Colonel. I caught cold in coming from Carlisle to Glasgow by night, and have not got rid of it. To-day has, however, been very fine, and I have enjoyed a long walk with George Combe into the country, looking at the farm-houses, each of which has a tall chimney attached belonging to the engine house. I am obliged to come from Glasgow here on Thursday to go through the ceremony of receiving the freedom of this city. Upon the whole, I am satisfied with the aspect of things in Scotland. I am not afraid of their going back from their convictions, and there is scarcely a man who is not against the present law, and nearly all are going on to total repeal. Fox Maule's conversion is important. He is heir to 80,000*l.* a year in land, 40,000 acres under the plough."[4]

From Dundee, through Hawick, the deputation crossed the border to Newcastle, Sunderland, Darlington, and other towns of that region. On their return to head-quarters, Mr. Bright recounted to a crowded meeting at Manchester what they had done, and he summed up their impressions of Scotland in words that deserve to be put on record. There were some general features, Mr. Bright said, which struck him very strongly in their tour through Scotland.

[3] *To George Wilson*, Stirling, Jan. 18, 1843.
[4] *To F. Cobden*, Jan. 15, 1843.

1843. "In the first place, I believe that the intelligence of the people
ÆT. 39. in Scotland is superior to the intelligence of the people of England. I take it from these facts. Before going to the meetings, we often asked the committee or the people with whom we came in contact, 'Are there any fallacies which the working people hold on this question? Have they any crotchets about machinery, or wages, or anything else?' And the universal reply was, 'No; you may make a speech about what you like; they understand the question thoroughly; and it is no use confining yourself to machinery or wages, for there are few men, probably no man here, who would be taken in by such raw jests as those.' Well, if the working men are so intelligent in Scotland, how are the landowners? You find, in that country, that the science of farming is carried to a degree of perfection which is almost unknown in England. You find them with a climate not so kind and genial as ours, for they often fail in gathering in wheat when the farmers in the south of England succeed; they have land not naturally so fertile as ours, and many are not so near a market to take off the whole of their produce as our farmers are; but we find there that the landowners are intelligent enough to know that the monopolists themselves rarely thrive under the monopolies they are so fond of, and that it would be much better for them to be subjected to the same wholesome stimulus which persons in other pursuits feel, and which is alike beneficial to the people so engaged, and to those who purchase the articles they produce. . . . . Well, then, as to the middle classes of Scotland, I hold that the municipalities of Scotland represent the opinion of the middle classes. In Glasgow, Edinburgh, Perth, and other towns, we found that the members of the corporations were a true index to the opinion of the main body of the inhabitants of the town in which it was situate. Now, in Glasgow, Edinburgh,

Kirkcaldy, Dundee, Perth, and Stirling, the highest honour which the municipal authorities of these cities and towns can give, has been conferred upon that man who is in all parts of the country, and throughout the world, recognized as the impersonation of Free Trade principles, and of the Anti-Corn-Law League.

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"Scotland, in former ages, was the cradle of liberty, civil and religious. Scotland, now, is the home of liberty; and there are more men in Scotland, in proportion to its population, who are in favour of the rights of man than there are in any other equal proportion of the population of this country. . . . I told them that they were the people who should have repeal of the Union; for that, if they were separate from England, they might have a government wholly popular and intelligent, to a degree which I believe does not exist in any other country on the face of the earth. However, I believe they will be disposed to press us on, and make us become more and more intelligent; and we may receive benefit from our contact with them, even though, for some ages to come, our connexion with them may be productive of evil to themselves."

In England, at least, it is certain that the amazing vigour and resolution of the League were regarded with intense disfavour by great and important classes. The League was thoroughly out of fashion. It was regarded as violent, extreme, and not respectable. A year before, it had usually been described as a selfish and contemptible faction. By the end of 1842 things had become more serious. The notorious pamphleteer of the *Quarterly Review* now denounced the League as the foulest and most dangerous combination of recent times. The *Times* spoke of Cobden, Bright, and their allies as "capering mercenaries who go frisking about the country;" as authors of incendiary clap-trap; as peripatetic orators puffing themselves into

1843. Æt. 39. an easy popularity by second-hand arguments. They were constantly accused of retarding their own cause, and frightening away respectable people, by their violence. Violence, as usual, denoted nothing more than that they knew their own minds, and pressed their convictions as if they were in earnest. In the earlier part of the autumn there had been a furious turn-out of the operatives in the mills, and later on in the season ricks had been burnt in the midland and southern counties. The League, in spite of the fact that its leaders were nearly all mill-owners, or connected with manufactures, was accused of promoting these outrages. There were loud threats of criminal proceedings against the obnoxious confederacy. It was rumoured on the Manchester Exchange that the Government had resolved to put down the League as an association constituted against the law of the land. If necessary, a new law would be made to enable them to suppress a body so seditious. This heat in the minds of the ruling class made them anxious at almost any cost to destroy Cobden, who was now openly recognized as the foremost personage in the detested organization. This partly explains what now followed.

The session of 1843 opened with the most painful incident in Cobden's parliamentary life. It is well to preface an account of it, by mentioning an event that happened on the eve of the session. Mr. Drummond, the private secretary of the Prime Minister, was shot in Parliament Street, and in a few days died from the wound. The assassin was Daniel M'Naghten, a mechanic from Glasgow, who at the trial was acquitted on the ground of insanity. From something that he said to a police inspector in his cell, the belief got abroad that in firing at Mr. Drummond he supposed that he was dealing with Sir Robert Peel. The evidence at the trial showed even this to be very doubtful, and in any case

the act was simply that of a lunatic. But it shook Sir Robert Peel's nerves. He was known by those who were intimate with him to have a morbid sensibility to whatever was physically painful or horrible. It has always been believed that his distress at the circumstances of Mr. Drummond's death was the secret of the scene with Cobden which we have now to describe.

Lord Howick on an early night in the session moved that the House should resolve itself into a committee to consider a passage in the Queen's speech, in which reference had been made to the prevailing distress. The debate on the motion was a great affair, and extended over five nights. It was a discussion worthy of the fame of the House of Commons—a serious effort on the part of most of those who contributed to it, to shed some light on the difficulties in which the country was involved. Cobden spoke on the last night of the debate (Feb. 17). He answered in his usual dexterous and argumentative way the statements of Lord Stanley, Mr. Gladstone, and other opponents of a repeal of the Corn Law, and then he proceeded to a fervent remonstrance with the Prime Minister. I quote some of the sentences which led to what followed: "If you (Sir Robert Peel) try any other remedy than ours, what chance have you for mitigating the condition of the country? You took the Corn Laws into your own hands after a fashion of your own, and amended them according to your own views. You said that you were uninfluenced in what you did by any pressure from without on your judgment. You acted on your own judgment, and would follow no other, and you are responsible for the consequences of your act. You said that your object was to find more employment for the increasing population. Who so likely, however, to tell you what markets could be extended, as those who are engaged in carrying on the trade and manufactures of the country? . . . You passed the law,

1843. you refused to listen to the manufacturers, and *I throw on*
ÆT. 39. *you all the responsibility of your own measure*. . . . The right hon. Baronet acted on his own judgment, and he retained the duty on the two articles on which a reduction of duty was desired, and he reduced the duties on those on which there was not a possibility of the change being of much service to the country. It was folly or ignorance (*Oh! Oh!*). Yes, it was folly or ignorance to amend our system of duties, and leave out of consideration sugar and corn. The reduction of the duties on drugs and such things was a proper task for some Under-Secretary of State, dealing with the sweepings of office, but it was unworthy of any Minister, and was devoid of any plan. It was one of the least useful changes that ever was proposed by any Government. . . . It is his duty, he says, to judge independently, and act without reference to any pressure; and I must tell the right hon. Baronet that *it is the duty of every honest and independent member to hold him individually responsible for the present position of the country*. . . . I tell the right hon. gentleman that I, for one, care nothing for Whigs or Tories. I have said that I never will help to bring back the Whigs; but I tell him that the whole responsibility of the lamentable and dangerous state of the country rests with him. It ill becomes him to throw that responsibility on any one at this side. I say there never has been violence, tumult, or confusion, except at periods when there has been an excessive want of employment, and a scarcity of the necessaries of life. The right hon. Baronet has the power in his hands to do as he pleases."

When Cobden sat down, the Prime Minister rose to his feet, with signs of strong agitation in his usually impassive bearing. "Sir," he said, "the honourable gentleman has stated here very emphatically, what he has more than once stated at the conferences of the Anti-Corn-Law League, that

he holds me individually—" Here the speaker was interrupted by the intense excitement which his emphasis on the word, and the growing passion of his manner, had rapidly produced among his audience. "Individually responsible," he resumed, "for the distress and suffering of the country; that he holds me personally responsible. But be the consequences of these insinuations what they may, never will I be influenced by menaces, either in this House or out of this House, to adopt a course which I consider—" The rest of the sentence was lost in the shouts which now rose from all parts of the House. Cobden at once got up, but to little purpose. "I did not say," he began, "that I hold the right hon. gentleman personally responsible." Vehement cries arose on every side; "Yes, yes"—"You did, you did"—"Order"—"Chair." "You did," called out Sir Robert Peel. Cobden went on, "I have said that I hold the right hon. gentleman responsible by virtue of his office, as the whole context of what I said was sufficient to explain." 1843. ÆT. 39.

The enraged denials and the confusion with which the Ministerial benches broke into his explanation, showed Cobden that it was hopeless for the moment to attempt to clear himself. Sir Robert Peel resumed by reiterating the charge that Cobden had twice declared that he would hold the Minister individually responsible. This inauspicious beginning was the prelude of a strong and careful speech; as strong a speech as could be made by a minister who was not prepared to launch into the full tide of Cobden's own policy,[*] and had only doubtful arguments about practical

[*] The peroration of this speech is an admirably eloquent comparison between the pacific views of Wellington and Soult—"men who have seen the morning sun rise upon living masses of fiery warriors, so many of whom were to be laid in the grave before that sun should set"—and "anonymous and irresponsible writers in the public journals, who are doing all they can to exasperate the differences that have prevailed; and whose efforts were not directed by zeal for the national honour, but employed for the base

1843. convenience to bring against the stringent pleas of logical Æt. 39. consistency. What astonishes us is that such a performance should have followed such a preface. Those who have written about Sir Robert Peel's character have always been accustomed to say that, though there was originally a vein of fiery temper in him, yet he had won perfect mastery over it; and his outburst against Cobden was the only occasion when he seemed to fall into the angry impetuosity that was familiar enough on the lips of O'Connell, or Stanley, or Brougham. He was taunted before long by Mr. Disraeli with imitating anger as a tactical device, and taking the choleric gentleman for one of his many parts. Whether his display of emotion against Cobden was artificial or a genuine result of overstrung nerves, was disputed at the time, and it is disputed to this day by those who witnessed the scene. The display was undoubtedly convenient for the moment in damaging a very troublesome adversary.

Lord John Russell, who spoke after the Minister, had no particular reason to be anxious to defend so dubious a follower as Cobden, but his honourable spirit revolted against the unjust and insulting demeanour of the House. "I am sure," he said, "that for my own part, and I believe I can answer for most of those who sit round me, that the same sense was not attached to the honourable member for Stockport's words, as has been attached by the right honourable Baronet and honourable members opposite." When Lord John Russell had finished a speech that practically wound up the debate, Cobden returned to his explanation, and amid some interruptions from the opposite benches, as well as from the Speaker on a point of order, again insisted that he had intended to throw the responsibility of the Minister's measures upon him as the head of the Govern-

purposes of encouraging national anim sity, or promoting personal or party interest."

ment. In using the word "individually," he used it as the Minister himself used the personal pronoun when he said "I passed the tariff." "I treat him," Cobden concluded, "as the Government, as he is in the habit of treating himself."

Very stiffly Peel accepted the explanation. "I am bound to accept the construction which the honourable member puts upon the language he employed. He used the word 'individually' in so marked a way, that I and others put upon it a different explanation. He supposes the word 'individually' to mean public responsibility in the situation I hold, and I admit it at once. I thought the words he employed, 'I hold you individually responsible,' might have an effect, which I think many other gentlemen who heard them might anticipate."

The sitting was not to end without an assault on Cobden from a different quarter. Sir Robert Peel had no sooner accepted one explanation, than Mr. Roebuck made a statement that demanded another. He taxed Cobden with having spoken of Lord Brougham as a maniac; with having threatened his own seat at Bath; and with having tolerated the use of such reprehensible and dangerous language by members of the League, as justified Lord Brougham's exhortation to all friends of Corn Law Reform to separate themselves from such evil advisers. This incident sprang from some words which Brougham had used in the House of Lords a week before. They are a fine example of parliamentary mouthing, and of that cheap courage which consists in thundering against the indiscretions of an unpopular friend. If anything could retard the progress of the doctrines of the League, he had said, "it would be the exaggerated statements and violence of some of those connected with their body—the means adopted by them at some of their meetings to excite—happily they have not much suc-

1843. Æt. 39. ceeded—to excite discontent and breakings-out into violence in different parts of the country; and, above all, I cannot discharge my duty to your Lordships and to my own conscience, if I do not express the utter abhorrence and disgust with which I have noted some men—men clothed with sacred functions, though I trust unconnected with the League, who have actually in this very metropolis of a British and Christian community, and in the middle of the nineteenth century of the gospel of grace and peace, not scrupled to utter words to which I will not at present more particularly allude, but which I abhor, detest, and scorn, as being calculated to produce fatal effects—I will not say have produced them—but calculated to produce the taking away of innocent life."

Cobden, as we might expect, had spoken freely of this rebuke as the result of a reckless intellect and a malignant spirit, or words to that effect.[6] Nobody can think that Mr. Roebuck had chosen his moment very chivalrously. Even now, when time and death are throwing the veil of kindly oblivion over the struggle, we read with some satisfaction the denunciation by Mr. Bright, of the "Brummagem Brougham, who, when the whole Ministerial side of the House was yelling at the man who stood there, the very impersonation of justice to the people, stood forward and dared to throw his puny dart at Richard Cobden." There is hardly an instance which illustrates more painfully the ungenerous, the unsparing, the fierce treatment for which a man must be prepared who enters public life in the House of Commons. The sentiment of the House itself was against Cobden. It always is more or less secretly against anyone of its members who is known to have a serious influence

[6] Mr. Bright also took the matter up in correspondence with Lord Brougham, and the language on both sides is as pithy as might be expected. (Feb. 15—24.)

outside, and to be raising the public opinion of constituencies to an inconveniently strong pitch. Cobden was scarcely allowed to explain what he had really said to Mr. Roebuck. It was simply this:—"If you justify Lord Brougham in this attack on the ministers who attend the conference of the Anti-Corn Law League, you will get into trouble at Bath, and you will be considered the opponent of that body, and you will have your Anti-Corn-Law tea parties, and some members of the League visiting Bath. So far from wishing to see Mr. Roebuck out of Parliament," Cobden concluded, "he is the last man I should wish to see removed from the seat which he now holds."

Cobden's own remarks on this unhappy evening are better than any that an outsider can offer. To his brother Frederick he wrote as follows:—

"The affair of last Friday seems to be working more and more to our advantage. It has been the talk of everybody here, from the young lady on the throne, down to the back-parlour visitors of every pot-house in the metropolis. And the result seems to be a pretty general notion that Peel has made a great fool of himself, if not something worse. He is obliged *now* to assume that he was in earnest, for no man likes to confess himself a hypocrite, and to put up with the ridicule of his own party in private as a coward. Lord —— was joking with Ricardo in the House the other night about him; pointing towards Peel as he was leaning forward, he whispered, 'There, the fellow is afraid somebody is taking aim at him from the gallery.' Then the pack at his back are not very well satisfied with themselves at having been so palpably dragged through the mud by him, for they had evidently not considered that I was threatening him. Indeed the fact of their having called for Bankes to speak after I sat down, and whilst Peel was

1843. on his legs, clearly showed (and they cannot escape from the

ÆT. 39. unpleasant reflection) that they were unconscious of any grievance being felt by the latter, and that they considered the personality to refer to the former. They now feel themselves convicted of having taken the cue from Peel and joined *en masse* (without a conviction in their own minds to sanction the course they took), in hunting me down as an assassin. They will hear more of it. But the best part of the whole affair is that everybody of every shade of politics has read my speech carefully, in order to be able to judge of Peel's grounds of attack upon me. The consequence is that all the Tories of Oxford, as I learn, have been criticizing every word of it, and the result, I am told, is unfavourable to Peel. . . . He is looking twenty per cent. worse since I came into the House, and if I had only Bright with me, we could worry him out of office before the close of the session.[7]

"The *thing* is on its last legs. The wholesale admissions of our principles by the Government must prove destructive to the system in no very long time. The whole matter turns upon the possibility of their finding a man to fill the office of executioner for them, and when Peel bolts or betrays them, the game is up. It is this conviction in my mind which induced me after some deliberation to throw the responsibility upon Peel, and he is not only alarmed at it, but indiscreet enough to let everybody know that he is so. . . . Our meeting last night was a wonderful exhibition. In the course of a couple of months we will have entire possession of the metropolis. Nothing will alarm Peel so much as exhibitions of strength and feeling at his own door. I am

[7] Mr. Bright, as it happened, was returned to Parliament before the end of the session. He contested Durham in April, 1843, and was beaten by Lord Dungannon. The new member was unseated on petition, on the ground of bribery. Mr. Bright again offered himself, and was elected (July, 1843).

overdone from all parts with letters and congratulations, and can hardly find time to say a word to my friends."[8] 1843. ÆT. 39.

The enemies of the League made the most of what had happened. They spoke of Cobden as politically ruined, and ruined beyond retrieval. Brougham, with hollow pity, wrote about the "downfall of poor Mr. Cobden." It soon appeared that there was another side to the matter. Meetings were held to protest against the treatment which Cobden had received from the Minister and the House; sympathetic addresses were sent to him from half the towns in England, and all the towns in Scotland; and for many weeks afterwards, whenever he appeared in a public assembly, he was greeted with such acclamations as had seldom been heard in public assemblies before. We may believe that Cobden was perfectly sincere when he said to one of his friends:—"I dislike this personal matter for many good reasons, public and private. We must avoid any of this individual glorification in the future. My forte is simplicity of action, hard working behind the scenes, and common sense in council; but I have neither taste nor aptitude for these public displays."[9]

At Manchester some eight thousand men and women met to hear stirring speeches on the recent affair. Mr. Bright moved a resolution, for an address to Cobden, in words that glow with noble and energetic passion, while they keep clear of hero-worship. "I do not stand up," he said, "to flatter the member for Stockport. I believe him to be a very intelligent and very honest man; I believe that he will act with a single eye to the good of his country; I believe that he is firmly convinced of the truth of the great principles of which he is so distinguished an advocate."

[8] *To F. Cobden*, Feb. 28, 1843.
[9] *To E. Baines*, March 8, 1843.

1843. Æt. 39. It was in reply to this address from Manchester, that Cobden wrote a letter to Sir Thomas Potter, with which we may close a very disagreeable episode :—

"I have just received an address signed by upwards of 31,000 inhabitants of Manchester, declaring their approval of my public conduct as an advocate of the principle of commercial freedom, and their indignation at a late attempt to give a perverted and hateful meaning to my language in Parliament. Allow me through you, who have done me the honour to place your name at the head of the list of signatures, to convey to your fellow-townsmen the expression of my heartfelt gratitude for this manifestation of their sympathy and confidence.

"Whilst I unfeignedly profess my unworthiness to receive such a flattering and unexpected testimonial in reward for my public services generally, I should feel degraded indeed if I could not conscientiously accept the prompt repudiation of the conduct imputed to me on a recent occasion. Nay, I should feel it to be derogatory from my character as a man and a Christian, that my countrymen should come forward to repel the misinterpretation which has been given to my words, were it not necessary on public grounds to prevent the First Minister of the Crown from evading, under any misconstruction of language, his responsibility for the alarming consequences of the measures of his Government—a responsibility not to the hand of the assassin, but a constitutional and moral responsibility which has been defined in the language of Edmund Burke: 'Where I speak of responsibility, I do not mean to exclude that species of it which the legal powers of the country have a right finally to exact from those who abuse a public trust: but high as this is, there is a responsibility which attaches on them, from which the whole legitimate power of this kingdom cannot absolve them. There is a responsi-

bility to conscience and to glory, a responsibility to the 1843.
existing world, and to that posterity which men of their ÆT. 39.
eminence cannot avoid for glory or for shame—a responsibility to a tribunal at which not only ministers, but kings and parliaments, but even nations themselves, must one day answer.'[1]

"Never at any period of our history did this constitutional and moral responsibility attach more strongly to a minister than at the present moment, when the country is struggling, amidst distress and embarrassment the most alarming, against a system of monopoly which threatens the ruin of our manufactures and commerce. That this system, with its disastrous consequences of a declining trade, a sinking revenue, increasing pauperism, and a growing disaffection in the people, owes its continuance to the support of the present Prime Minister more than to that of his entire party, few persons who have had the opportunity of observing the manner in which he individualizes in his own person the powers of government, will deny.

"That the withdrawal of his support from this pernicious system would do more at the present moment than all the efforts of the friends of Free Trade to effect the downfall of monopoly has been proclaimed upon high authority from his own side of the House. 'If the right hon. Baronet,' said Mr. Liddell, member for North Durham, in the debate, Feb. 3, 'had shown any symptoms of wavering in the support of the Corn Law, which he had himself put upon a sound footing last year, such conduct would have been productive of a hundred times more mischief than all the denunciations of the Anti-Corn-Law League.' With such evidences of the power possessed by the First Minister of the Crown, I should have been an unworthy representative of the people, and a traitor to the suffering interests of my

[1] These are the closing words of the *Third Letter on a Regicide Peace*.

1843. constituents, had I failed in my duty of reminding him of
Æt. 39. his accountability for the proper exercise of his power.

"Sanctioned and sustained as I have been by the approving voice of the inhabitants of Manchester, and of my countrymen generally, I shall go forward undeterred by the arts or the violence of my opponents, in that course to which a conscientious sense of public duty impels me; and whilst studiously avoiding every ground of personal irritation—for our cause is too vast in its objects, and too good and too strong in its principles, to be made a mere topic of personal altercation—I shall never shrink from declaring in my place in Parliament the constitutional doctrine of the inalienable responsibility of the First Minister of the Crown for the measures of his Government."[1]

A few days after the scene in the House of Commons, the first of those great meetings was held, which eventually turned opinion in London in good earnest to the views of the League. The Crown and Anchor and the Freemasons' Tavern had become too small to hold the audiences. Drury Lane Theatre was hired, and here seven meetings were held between the beginning of March and the beginning of May. The crowds who thronged the theatre were not always the same in keenness and energy of perception, but their numbers never fell short, and their enthusiasm grew more intense as they gradually mastered the case, and became better acquainted with the persons and characters of the prominent speakers. In the following letter to his brother, Cobden hints at the special advantage which he expected from these gatherings:—

"There is but one of their lies," he says, referring to the gossip of the Tories, "that I should care to make them prove; that is that our business is worth 10,000*l.* a year!

[1] *To Sir Thomas Potter*, March 1, 1843.

By the way, it is a wholesome sign that my middle-class popularity seems rather to be increased by my avowal of my origin; and for the first time probably a man is served by that aristocratic class, who owes nothing to birth, parentage, patronage, connexions, or education. Don't listen to the nonsense about our being prosecuted. The enemy has burnt his fingers already by meddling with the Leaguers. Wait till we have held two or three weekly meetings in Drury Lane Theatre, and you will see that we are not the men to be put to the ordeal of a middle-class jury. Our metropolitan gatherings are bonâ-fide demonstrations of earnest energetic men of the shop-keeping class, a large proportion under thirty years of age. There is this advantage from a middle-class movement in London, that it always carries with it the working men, who are all intermingled by their occupation with the class above them more completely than in any other large town. I observe what you say about the spirit of our Manchester Tories. The baseness of that party exceeds anything since the time of the old Egyptian worshippers of Bulls and Beetles. But depend upon it, the hostility to the League is confined pretty much to the leaders, and you will see when a general election turns upon the Corn Laws (and we must have a dissolution upon the question before settling it), that the rank and file of the party, the shopkeepers and owners of small cottage property, will either desert the Tory masters, or fold their arms and refuse to go into action at their bidding. But our salvation will come from the rural districts. The farmers are already half alienated from the landlords, and the schism will widen every rent-day. Amidst the deluge of letters that I have received since the Peel blunder, are lots of communications from farmers. My declaration that I am a farmer's son, seems to have told as I expected, and it is a point of too much importance not

1843. to be made the most of, even at the risk of being
ÆT. 39. egotistical." [3]

"The meeting at Taunton was a bonâ-fide farmers' gathering from all parts of the division of Somerset, and there was but one opinion in the town amongst all parties who attended the market, that the game of the 'political landlords' is all up. I find our case upon agricultural grounds far stronger and easier than in relation to the trading interests. Now, depend upon it, it will be just as we have often predicted, the agricultural districts of the south will carry our question. They are as a community in every respect, whether as regards intelligence, morality, politics, or public spirit, superior to the folks that surround you in Lancashire. I intend to hold county meetings every Saturday after Easter." [4]

The year 1843 was famous for a great agitation in each of the three kingdoms. O'Connell was rousing Ireland by the cry of Repeal. Scotland was kindled to one of its most passionate movements of enthusiasm by the outgoing of Chalmers and his brethren from the Establishment. In England the League against the Corn Law was rapidly growing in flood and volume. If ever the natural history of agitations is taken in hand, it will be instructive to compare the different methods of these three movements, two of which succeeded, while the third failed.

Cobden never disdained large popular meetings, to be counted by thousands. These gatherings of great multitudes were useful, not merely because they were likely to stir a certain interest more or less durable in those who attended them, but also because they impressed the Protectionist party with the force and numbers that were being arrayed

[3] *To F. Cobden*, March 11, 1843.
[4] *To F. Cobden*, April 10, 1843.

against them. But he did not overrate either their significance or their value. Chalmers, in his great work of reorganizing the broken Church, always expressed strong distaste for large meetings, compared with small conferences attended by none but those who could be persuaded to do what he commended. He wanted, he used to say, not the excitement of emotion, but the sturdiness and endurance of good working principles. It was the same kind of feeling which made Cobden always look back with peculiar satisfaction to his share in the education of the farmers in sound economic principles by dialectical disputes from waggons, and close debate over the beef and ale at market ordinaries.

The League had shown the evil effects of the Corn Law upon operatives, shopkeepers, manufacturers, and merchants. They now turned to another quarter, and set to work to prove that the same law inflicted still greater injuries upon the tenant farmers and the labourers. The towns were already convinced, and the time was a good one for an invasion of the agricultural districts. The farmers were getting low prices. They were disgusted at the concessions to Free Trade which had been made in the budget, especially in the article of meat. They suspected their parliamentary friends of trickery, and a selfish deference to a plausible Minister.

The meetings in the counties were highly successful for their immediate purpose, and they are full of interest to look back upon. They are, perhaps, the most striking and original feature in the whole agitation. There was true political courage and profound faith, in the idea of awakening the most torpid portion of the community, not by any appeal to passion, but by hard argumentative debate. It was generally accepted that the controversy was one to be settled by arguments and not by force. Sir George Lewis said that if the proposal had been to annihilate rents instead of reducing them, the Protectionists would as certainly have

1843. gone from words to blows, as the American slaveholders
ÆT. 39. afterwards did when their peculiar institution was touched. One reason why the shock, when it came, was accepted without disorder, was that the League had succeeded in thoroughly loosening, if not in overthrowing, the prejudices of those who expected to be immediately ruined by the change. The discussion was usually conducted in a fair and manly spirit on both sides. The speakers for the League told their hearers that they did not wish to say anything personally offensive to anybody; that they were simply anxious that what was true on the subject of protection should be discovered; and that they gave the gentlemen in the opposition waggon credit for anxiety to do the same thing. As a rule, things were conducted with order and good temper. Land agents, valuers, and auctioneers were angrier disputants than either farmers or squires. At Dorchester there was an attempt to storm the hustings, but the Leaguers were prepared, and a stout party of their friends, aided by the labourers, repulsed the attack. At Canterbury, where the cause of protection was advocated oddly enough by Mr. G. P. R. James, the renowned novelist, one or two corn-factors insulted Cobden and Mr. Bright, and there was some uplifting of sticks. There were occasional threats of violence, tossing in a blanket, and so forth, beforehand. But when the time came, all passed off peaceably.[6]

Farmers who were afraid of attending meetings in their own immediate district, used to travel thirty or forty miles to places where they could listen to the speakers without being known. Enemies came to the meetings, and began to take notes in a very confident spirit, but as the arguments became too strong for them, the pencil was laid aside, and

[6] When a visit from Mr. Bright was announced at Alnwick, the *Newcastle Journal* had a most brutal paragraph to the effect that some stalwart yeoman should take the matter into his hands.

the paper was torn up. At Norwich, the leading yeoman of the county put a number of questions to Cobden, which were so neatly and conclusively answered, that the farmers who were listening to the controversy burst out into loud applause. The terse sentences in which Cobden condensed his matter carried conviction home. Though it was impossible for him to invent new arguments or discover unfamiliar facts every day, yet even those who were best acquainted with the facts and the arguments, were struck at every meeting by his power of selecting and concentrating the important points, with a conversational strength that brought every word within the easy comprehension of the most careless listener. Antagonists were sometimes astute, but were often stupid even to impenetrability. In one place, a clergyman firmly contended that scarcity had nothing to do with dearness. In that case, Mr. Bright replied, he need not be afraid of repeal, for of course on his principles abundance could not produce cheapness.

At Hertford the Shire Hall was so crowded, that the meeting was held in the open air. The multitude was mainly composed of farmers, and on the skirts of the multitude some of the most important squires in the county sat on horseback to hear the discussion. Cobden spoke for two hours, and obtained a sympathetic hearing by his announcement that he was the son of a Sussex farmer, that he had kept his father's sheep, and had seen the misery of a rent-day. It was at this meeting at Hertford that he first met Mr. Lattimore, the well-known farmer of Wheathampstead, to whom he was in the subsequent course of the movement greatly indebted for agricultural facts bearing on Free Trade.*

* "I have not forgotten the trouble you took to instruct me in the agricultural view of the question; how you visited me in London for that purpose. I recollect after making my speech in the House on the agri-

1843. Æт. 39. At Aylesbury, which was the stronghold of the Duke of Buckingham, after his address, Cobden was confronted by a long list of questions from an anonymous inquirer. Would not Free Trade lower the price of corn and the means of employing labour, from thirty to fifty per cent.? Did the members of the League think the existing price of the quartern loaf, which was then fivepence, too high for either producer or consumer? Cobden answered them with his usual dexterity, and wound up with the crucial question on his own part; namely, in what way farmers and farm-labourers had profited by the Corn Laws since 1815? A resolution approving of the principles of Free Trade was then put and carried with a few dissentients—so few, that Lord Nugent, who was in the chair, said they were about as many as would have held up their hands in favour of Free Trade five and twenty years before. At Uxbridge, the farmers who usually attended the corn-market, invited Cobden to explain his views to them. The arrangements for the meeting were left entirely in their own hands. The tickets of admission were issued by the farmers, and disposed of by them; the county was ransacked for supporters of monopoly, and the discomfiture of the prophet of the League was confidently predicted. The audience was more exclusively composed of farmers than any that had yet been held. When the time came, four gentlemen, one after another, advocated the cause of monopoly as ably as they could, and the discussion between them on the one hand, and Cobden and Joseph Hume on the other, lasted

cultural view of the Free Trade question—the most successful speech I ever made—that several county members asked me where my land lay, thinking I must be an experienced proprietor and farmer. I told them I did not own an acre, but that I owed my knowledge to the best farmer of my acquaintance, which I have always considered you to be."—*Cobden to R. Lattimore, April 20, 1864.* The speech referred to as the most successful he ever made, I presume to be that of March 18, 1845, No. xv. in the collected speeches.

for four hours and a half. In the end, the arguments of the Free Traders were felt to be so absolutely unanswerable, that a resolution in favour of total and immediate repeal was carried by five to one. The circumstances were much the same, and the result was the same at Lincoln, where Cobden was accompanied by Mr. Bright. At Taunton, the church bells were rung, flags with free-trade mottoes were hung from the windows, and a brass band insisted on accompanying the deputation from the railway to the place of meeting. Cobden, Mr. Bright, and Mr. Moore were listened to with unwearied attention for more than four hours. The farmers listened at first with doubt and suspicion. Gradually their faces cleared, conviction began to warm them, and at last such an impression had been made, that eight hundred farmers out of a meeting of twelve hundred persons, voted in favour of total and immediate repeal.

In Bedford Cobden had not a single friend or acquaintance. He had simply announced as extensively as he could by placards, that he meant to visit the town on a given day. The farmers had been canvassed far and wide to attend to put down the representatives from the Anti-Corn-Law League. The Assembly Rooms could not hold half the persons who had come together, and they adjourned to a large field outside the town. Three waggons were provided to serve as hustings, but the monopolist party rudely seized them, and Cobden had to wait while a fourth waggon was procured. Lord Charles Russell presided, and the discussion began. The proceedings went on from three o'clock in the afternoon until nine o'clock in the evening, in spite of heavy showers of rain. At first Cobden was listened to with some impatience, but as he warmed to his subject, and began to deliver telling strokes of illustration and argument, the impression gradually spread that he was right. The chairman was

1843. unwillingly obliged to declare that an amendment in favour of
ÆT. 39. Free Trade was carried by a large majority.

"We fought a hard battle at Bedford," Cobden writes to his brother, "against brutish squires and bull-frogs, but carried it two to one, contrary to the expectations of every man in the county. Lord Charles Russell is the man who opposed even his brother John's fixed duty, declaring at the time that it was to throw two millions of acres out of cultivation. After Bedford, we can win anywhere; and it is giving great moral power to my movements in the rural districts to be *always* successful. The aristocracy are becoming savage and alarmed at the war going on in their own camp."[7]

"On Saturday next," he continues, "I shall be at Rye, where there will be a grand muster from all the eastern part of our county and from parts of Kent. These county meetings are becoming provokingly interesting and attractive, so far as the landlords are affected. They begin to feel the necessity of showing fight, and yet when they do come out to meet me, they are sure to be beaten on their own dunghill. The question of protection is now an open one at all the market tables in the counties where I have been, and the discussion of the question cannot fail to have the right issue."[8]

This discussion sometimes broke down for lack of representatives of the opposite cause:—

"Our meeting at Rye was a very tame affair for want of any open spirit of opposition. The audience was almost as quiet as a flock of their own Southdowns. I fear the squires and parsons will give up the old game of opposition, and try to keep the farmers away. However, we have sown the seeds in the South of England which nothing will eradicate.

[7] *To F. W. Cobden*, London, June 5, 1843.
[8] Tunbridge Wells, June 7, 1843.

Wherever I go, I make the Corn question an open question at all the market tables. And everywhere are strong-headed men who take up our cause. At Winchester I found many intelligent farmers. Mr. M., who moved the Free Trade resolution, is, with his brother, the largest occupier in the county. A very quiet man, highly respected: his very name a passport. A Mr. E. was at the meeting, who rents 3000 acres. After hearing our statements, he remarked, 'These facts and arguments are quite unanswerable. Every word is true.'"[9]

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At Penenden Heath (June 29), three thousand of the men of Kent assembled to hear a close argumentative debate between Cobden and a local landowner. Two days later there was an open-air meeting at Guildford, where Cobden stated his case, tided over interruptions, and met objections from all comers for several hours. We need not further prolong the history of this summer's campaign. Hereford, Lewes, Croydon, Bristol, Salisbury,[1] Canterbury, and Reading, were all visited before the end of the session by Cobden and Mr. Bright, or some other coadjutor. In all of them, amid great variety of illustrations, and with a constantly increasing stock of facts, he pinned his opponents to the point, How, when, or where, have farmers and farm labourers benefited by the Corn Law? His greatest victory was at Colchester, the chief town of a county which kept its parliamentary representation unsullied by a single Liberal. The whole district had been

[9] *To F. W. Cobden*, London, July 20, 1843.

[1] It was at Salisbury, on a second visit later in the year, that Cobden was reported to have pointed to the cathedral and said: "He thought the best thing that could happen would be to see that huge monster turned into a good factory." Even his foes admitted that this story was a gross fabrication, but it was often revived against him in the days of the Crimean War. Probably some one said that this was what he was capable of saying, and then by well-known mythopœic processes, it was believed that he actually had said it.

1843. Æt. 39. astir with angry expectation for many days; the drum ecclesiastic had been vigorously beaten all over the county; Sir John Tyrrell, at this time one of the doughtiest followers of Peel, promised or threatened to attend; passions waxed very high; special constables were sworn in; and the violent and the timid alike declared that the agitators would find themselves in no small bodily peril. Hustings were erected in a large field, and when the day came, several thousands of people assembled from all parts of the county. At the appointed hour Cobden and Charles Villiers were at their posts, and they were soon followed by Sir John Tyrrell and Mr. Ferrand. Then the tournament began. The battle raged for six hours, and the League champions achieved a striking victory. The amendment to his resolution was put to utter rout, and when night fell, Sir John Tyrrell was found to have silently vanished. At one point in the controversy, he had irrelevantly defied Cobden to do further battle with him at Chelmsford. Cobden instantly took up the glove, and on the appointed day to Chelmsford he went. Sir John, however, had already had enough of an unequal match, and Cobden carried on the controversy in the usual way and with his usual success.

"Will these repeated discomfitures," cried the *Morning Post*, "induce the landowners of England to open their eyes to the dangers that beset them? What may be the causes of Mr. Cobden's success? The primary cause is assuredly that which conduces to the success of Sir Robert Peel. Why, indeed, if parliamentary landowners deem it honest and wise to support the author of the Tariff and the new Corn Law, should not the tenant farmers of England support Sir Robert Peel's principles when enunciated by Mr. Cobden? With what pretensions to consistency could Sir John Tyrrell oppose Mr. Cobden on the hustings at Colchester, after having supported all the Free Trade measures

that had made the session of 1842 infamous in the annals of our legislation? . . . Mr. Cobden's speech is by no means unanswerable. But Sir John Tyrrell assuredly made no attempt to answer it. He uttered some things not devoid of shrewdness, but they bore as slight reference to the fallacies on which Mr. Cobden traded, as they did to the false doctrines of the Koran. It is not, we fear, by such men as the present race of the parliamentary landowners that the deadly progress of the League is to be arrested."

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Mr. Bright once said at a public meeting,[2] that people had talked much more than was pleasant to him about his friend Cobden and himself, and he would tell them that in the Council were many whose names were never before the public, and yet who deserved the highest praise. He was sorry that it should for a moment be supposed, that they who were more prominently before the public, and who were but two or three, should be considered the most praiseworthy. Nor was he singular. Cobden took every opportunity quietly and modestly of saying the same thing. The applause of multitudes never inflated him into a demagogue, as it was truly observed, any more than the atmosphere of Parliament and of London society ever depressed him into conventionality.[3] I cannot find a trace or a word in the most private correspondence, betraying on the part of any prominent actor in the League a symptom of petty or ignoble egotism. They were too much in earnest. Never on a scene where the temptations to vanity were so many, was vanity so entirely absent.

Cobden's incessant activity, his dialectical skill, the

[2] October, 1843.

[3] "Members were subject to great temptations in London, and those who had not been behind the scenes little knew the perils and dangers they had to go through. It was very difficult for a man, however clothed in the panoply of principle, to go through the ordeal of a London season, without finding his coat of mail perforated from one quarter or another."—*Cobden, at Ashton-under-Lyne*, January, 1843.

1843. Æt. 39. scandal of the recent scene in the House, and perhaps the fact that he was a member of the House, all contributed to make his position at this time conspicuous and unique, but his simplicity of spirit filled men with an affection and love for him, which made his success their own. As a speaker, nobody knew better than he did the more stately genius of his chief friend and ally. He once told an audience at Rochdale that at this time, for reasons which they would be at no loss to guess, he always stipulated that Mr. Bright should let him speak first. From Winchester Mr. Bright wrote to him, that they had promised faithfully that he should attend the meeting, and that if the train failed to bring him, they should run the country. If Cobden's name was mentioned at a meeting, the audience would rise and give three times three for the member for Stockport, the friend of the people. At Manchester, an immense gathering assembled to present an address to him, formally describing him as the leader of the movement; and the cheers grew more enthusiastic when a letter from Lord Ducie was read, declaring that there was no man alive to whom the country was more indebted than to Richard Cobden. In the same way the men on the other side singled him out for special vituperation; and people who had never seen a print-works in their lives, excited agricultural audiences by asserting that Cobden was making enormous wealth at the expense of the strength, the happiness, the limbs, and the very lives of little children.

As he said afterwards, Cobden lived at this time in public meetings. Along with the county meetings, there was for some time a weekly gathering at the Commercial Rooms in Threadneedle Street, where the League speakers reiterated their arguments to crowded audiences of merchants and bankers. There were the enthusiastic assemblies at Drury Lane and afterwards at Covent Garden, in which the in-

terest of the London public was so great that the report of them doubled and trebled the ordinary sale of the newspapers on the following morning. Besides all this, Cobden attended to everything that in any way concerned his own great subject in the House of Commons. There his position by this time had become really formidable to the Minister. His complete knowledge of every aspect of the case, his tenacity, his skill in debate, and the immense influence which it was perceived that he was acquiring out of doors, had brought him to a front place; and the man who in February had been spoken of as politically ruined, was by August exercising a pressure on the mind of Sir Robert Peel, as strong on the one side, as the pressure of a whole group of insurgent dukes on the other.

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The serious subjects of discussion in Parliament were all related to the social condition of the people, and men noticed how at one point or another they all touched the question of Free Trade. The Government brought in their famous measure of national education, as we shall afterwards see. The League, though not formally opposed to the measure, pointed out the folly of first by the Corn Law taxing the people into poverty, and then taxing the impoverished to pay for the instruction of the starving. Charles Buller pressed his scheme of state-aided emigration.[4] The League retorted that if the Corn

[4] In his speech, Buller reproached Cobden with condescending to practise on the ignorance of his audience by resort to stale theatrical clap-trap, which must have been suggested to him by the genius of Drury Lane—where he was speaking. As this particular passage has been much applauded by Cobden's admirers, both abroad and at home, I venture to reproduce it: "Did the men who signed that memorial ever go down to St. Catherine's Dock, and see an emigration ship about to start on its voyage? Had they seen these poor emigrants sitting till the moment of departure on the stones of the quay, as if they would cling to the last to the land of their birth? They need not inquire what were their feelings; they would read their hearts in their faces. Had they ever seen them taking leave of their friends? He had watched such scenes over and over again. He had seen a venerable woman taking leave of her grandchildren, and he had seen a

1843. Law were repealed, there would be no need for emigration.
Æt. 39. A Free Trader moved for a committee to inquire into the burdens and exemptions peculiar to the landed interest. A county member proposed an amendment that the House should direct its attention to Associations which, in matters affecting agriculture and commerce, pretended to influence the Legislature, and which by their combination and proceedings were dangerous to the public peace and inconsistent with the spirit of the constitution. Cobden retaliated with a vigorous account of the state of the labourers on the county member's own estates, and by the telling fact that in that very county of Dorset one out of every seven of the population was a pauper. On the occasion of Mr. Villiers's annual motion for a committee to consider the duties on foreign corn with a view to their immediate abolition, Cobden made one of the most spirited of his speeches on a subject on which it appeared that everything had been said.[5] It was circulated by hundreds of thousands of copies, and produced a great effect upon opinion. The Government introduced a bill for the repeal of the restrictions on the export of machinery. Cobden supported the removal of this last prohibition on the Statute book. Later in the Session, he made a vigorous attack on the Sugar-duties, and the policy of giving a preference to the produce of the British colonies, when the colonies contributed nothing to the revenue, and burdened

struggle between the mother and the grandmother to retain possession of a child. As these emigrant-vessels departed from the Mersey to the United States, the eyes of all on deck were directed back to the port whence they had started, and the last objects which met their gaze, as their native land receded from their view, were the tall bonding-houses of Liverpool, where under the lock—he was going to say the Queen's lock, but under the lock of the aristocracy—were shut up some hundreds of thousands of barrels of the finest flour of America—the only object that these unhappy wanderers were going in quest of." His friends, he was told, did not know he had so much sentiment and eloquence in him.

[5] No. IV. in the collected speeches.

us with civil and military expenses. The whole colonial trade amounted only to 10,000,000*l.* a year, and to maintain this, 5,000,000*l.* were spent by the mother country. The West Indian sugar-grower was the natural ally of the British corn-grower,* and with equal zeal the Protectionist organs took up both causes against Cobden's penetrating attacks. These organs persisted in reproaching their party in the two Houses with weakness in defence of the sacred cause. There was disunion and want of confidence throughout the

* The following extract from one of Cobden's speeches at Covent Garden states his argument, and is a characteristic illustration of his style:—

"Now, what is the pretence for monopoly in sugar? They cannot say that it benefits the revenue; neither is it intended to benefit the farmer in England, or the negro in the West Indies. What, then, is the pretence set up? Why, that we must not buy slave-grown sugar! I believe that the ambassador from the Brazils is here at present, and I think I can imagine an interview between him and the President of the Board of Trade. He delivers his credentials; he has come to arrange a treaty of commerce. I think I see the President of the Board of Trade calling up a solemn, earnest, pious expression, and saying, 'You are from the Brazils—we shall be happy to trade with you, but we cannot conscientiously receive slave-grown produce!' His Excellency is a good man of business; so he says, 'Well, then, we will see if we can trade together in some other way. What have you to sell us?' 'Why,' returns the President of the Board of Trade, 'cotton goods; in these articles we are the largest exporters in the world!' 'Indeed!' exclaims his Excellency; 'cotton, did you say? Where is cotton brought from?' 'Why,' replies the Minister, 'hem—chiefly from the United States,' and at once the question will be, 'Pray, is it free-grown cotton or slave-grown cotton?' Now, I leave you to imagine the answer, and I leave you also to picture the countenance of the President of the Board of Trade. . . . Now, have any of you had your humanity entrapped and your sympathies bamboozled by these appeals against slave-grown produce? Do you know how the law stands with regard to the sugar trade at present? We send our manufactures to Brazil as it is; we bring back Brazilian sugar; that sugar is refined in this country—refined in bonding warehouses, that is, warehouses where English people are not allowed to get at it—and it is then sent abroad by our merchants, by those very men who are now preaching against the consumption of slave-grown sugar. Ay, those very men and their connexions who are loudest in their appeals against slave-grown sugar, have bonding warehouses in Liverpool and London, and send this sugar to Russia, to China, to Turkey, to Poland, to Egypt; in short, to any country under the sun—to countries, too, having a population of 500,000,000; and yet these men will not allow you to have slave-grown sugar here."

1843. Æt. 39. party. Mr. Gladstone eloquently expounded the principles of Free Trade, though it was true that he gave the adroitest reasons for not applying them. Mr. Cobden, they said, was a man of great energy, shrewdness, and strength of will, but the true cause of his successes in debate was the want of spirit in those who should have been his active adversaries. Was it not melancholy and even insufferable to witness "the landholders of England, the representatives of the blood of the Norman chivalry, shrinking under the blows aimed at them by a Manchester money-grubber"?

Unhappily there was nobody in Manchester to whom this evil designation was less applicable. Only a week before the close of the session, Cobden wrote to his brother:—

"Your account is surely enough a bad turn up. There must be something radically fallacious in our mode of calculating cost or fixing prices. Not that I expected very much this year, because our last autumn must have been a serious loss, and the spring business squeezed into too small a space of time to do great things in. We must have a rigid overhauling of expenses, and see if they can be reduced; and if not, we must at all events fix our prices to cover all charges. I rather suspect we made a blunder in fixing them too low last spring. But with our present reputation, we must not give our goods away. The truth is, a great portion of our Manchester trade has always been done at no profit or at a loss. Still I do not fall into your despair. We have the chance of righting ourselves yet. For after all, our great losses have always arisen from fluctuations in the value of the stock, and there is no risk in that way for some years to come. As to other matters hanging over us, they can only be righted by a general revival of the district, and we shall get Free Trade from the necessities of the Exchequer."[1]

[1] *To F. W. Cobden, London, Aug. 17, 1843.*

The session came to an end; it does not appear, however, that he suffered himself to be long detained from the great work by private affairs. He went for two or three weeks with his family to the south of England for a breath of calm. By the middle of September, he and Mr. Bright were again at work at Oxford, Lancaster, and elsewhere. They were ubiquitous; to-day at Manchester, to-morrow at Lincoln, this week at Salisbury, the next in Haddingtonshire. A day without a meeting was said to be as deplorable to them, as the merciful emperor's day without a good deed. The following extracts from letters to his wife and his brother, from October to January (1844), will serve to show how Cobden passed the autumn and winter. 1843. Æt. 39.

"I have been incessantly occupied travelling or talking since I saw you, having made the journey across Northumberland, Cumberland, and Haddingtonshire twice. We go to-morrow to Kendal to give Warburton a lift, and I shall be home on Tuesday. I have seen much to gratify and instruct me. We spent a couple of days with Hope, and his neighbours the East Lothian farmers. They are a century before our Hants and Sussex chawbacons. In fact, they are, by comparison, educated gentlemen and practical philosophers, and their workpeople are more like Sharp and Roberts's skilled mechanics than our round-frocked peasantry. Our farmers cannot be brought to the Scotch standard by Lord Ducie or a hundred Lord Ducies. The men are wanting. We have better soil and climate, and the live and dead stock may be easily brought to match them, but the two-legged animals will not do in the present generation. We have seen much to encourage us. I have no doubt the Haddingtonshire farmers will commence an agitation against the Corn Laws, which will be a nucleus for independent action amongst their class elsewhere. The Northumberland farmers especially in the north are nearly upon a par with them, and

1844. they are just as likely to aid us. Altogether I am full of
ÆT. 40. hope from the experience of the last week. I feel no doubt that we shall, before Parliament meets, get a declaration signed by 1000 farmers in all parts of the kingdom, declaring the Corn Law to have been a cheat upon the tenantry."[1]

"*Aberdeen, Jan.* 14, 1844.—Here we are happily at the far end of our pilgrimage, and on Tuesday morning we hope to turn our faces homeward. It has been a hard week's work. After finishing our labours at Perth, I expected to have had a quiet day yesterday. We started in the morning by the coach for this place, but in passing through Forfar we found all the inhabitants at their doors or in the streets. They had heard of our intended passage through their town, and a large crowd was assembled at the inn where the coach stopped, which gave us three cheers; and nothing would do but we must stop to give them an address. We consented, and immediately the temperance band struck up, and paraded through the town, and the parish church bells were set a ringing, in fact the whole town was set in a commotion. We spoke to about two thousand persons in the parish church, which, notwithstanding that it was Saturday evening, was granted to us. It was the first time we ever addressed an Anti-Corn-Law audience in a parish church. Forfar is a poor little borough with a great many weavers of coarse linens, and their enthusiasm is nearly all we can expect from them. A subscription of about a hundred and fifty pounds will, however, be raised. We expect better things in the way of money here. Aberdeen is a fine large town with several extensive manufactories, and a good shipping port. But strange to say it is almost the only place in Scotland where the capitalists seem to have taken no part in the Free-trade movement. But I hope we shall

[1] *To F. W. Cobden*, Carlisle, Oct. 27, 1843.

be able to stir them up to-morrow. We shall depart from 1844.
this on Tuesday morning at half-past five for the south, ÆT. 40.
stopping at Montrose for a midday meeting, and then proceeding on to Dundee for a great meeting in the evening. Thus you see we are working double tides, travelling miles by coach and holding two meetings a day. I hope we shall last it out for another week. We are to have two large meetings here to-morrow. The deputation separated into two parties at Edinburgh. Moore and I came north, and Bright and Colonel Thompson went to the west of Scotland, taking Paisley, Kilmarnock, and Greenock, and we shall all meet again at Newcastle on Saturday next. We find a great change in the temperature in these northern regions. There is a hard frost, and the highlands are covered with snow. I have thus far escaped a cold, and find my health good; in fact, notwithstanding my hard work, I have been better this winter than ever, having escaped my usual fit of inflammation in my eyes. I think there is a special Providence watching over the Leaguers."

"*Dundee, Jan.* 17, 1844.—I am nearly overdone with work, two meetings at Aberdeen on Monday, up at four on Tuesday, travelled thirty-five miles, held a meeting at Montrose, and then thirty-five miles more to Dundee, for a meeting the same evening. To-morrow we go to Cupar Fife, next day, Leith, the day following, Jedburgh."

"*Newcastle-on-Tyne, Jan.* 22.—I got here last night from Jedburgh, where we had the most extraordinary meeting of all. The streets were blocked up with country people as we entered the place, some of whom had come over the hills for twenty miles. It is the Duke of Buccleuch's country, but he would be puzzled to find followers on his own lands to fight his battles as of old. To-night we meet here, to-morrow at Sunderland, the day after at Sheffield, where you will please address me to-morrow, on Thursday we shall be at York,

1844. and on Friday at Hull, and in Manchester on Saturday
ÆT. 40. evening."*

"*Hull, Jan.* 26, 1844.—I shall leave this place to-morrow by the train at half-past ten, and expect to reach Manchester by about five o'clock. I am, I assure you, heartily glad of the prospect of only two days' relaxation after the terrible fagging I have had for the last three weeks. To-day we have two meetings in Hull. I am in the Court House with a thousand people before me, and Bright is stirring up the lieges with famous effect. He is reminding the Hull people of the conduct of their ancient representative, Andrew Marvell, and talking of their being unworthy of the graves of their ancestors over which they walk. We shall have another meeting this evening."

There was one drawback to the Scotch. Before they crossed the border, the Leaguers had held meetings in Leicester, Nottingham, Sheffield, Leeds, where they got a couple of thousand pounds before they left the room. At a Scotch meeting, Cobden tells Mrs. Cobden, "we found that to name money was like reading the Riot Act, for dispersing them. They care too much for speeches by mere politicians and Whig aristocrats." But the results of the campaign were in the highest degree valuable. The deputation strengthened the faith in all the places that they visited, revived interest and conviction, and brought back to Manchester a substantial addition to the funds of their association.

The following letter to Mr. George Wilson belongs to this date, and illustrates a point on which Cobden and his friends were always most solicitous. It is written from Durham, for which Mr. Bright had been returned as member in the previous July:—

"You will remember that when Bright won this place, the Whigs (that is, the *Chronicle*) tried to make it a Whig

* *To F. W. Cobden*, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Jan. 22, 1844.

triumph, which Bright spoilt by his declaration at the Crown and Anchor, 'that it was not a party victory.' Now your best plan at Covent Garden on Thursday will be to prevent the Whigs playing us off against the Tories, by declaring that the City election was a trial of strength not between the League and the Ministry, or between the League and the Tory party, but between Free Trade and Monopoly. There is no way so certain of bringing the Whigs to our ranks, as by showing them that they will not be allowed to make a sham fight with the Tories at our expense. Depend on it the Whigs are now plotting how they can use us and throw us aside. The more we show our honesty in refusing to be made the tools of a party, the more shall we have the confidence of the moderate and honest Tories. You have now an opportunity of putting us right with both parties, and I hope you will give the right tone to the speaking at Covent Garden."[1]

[1] *To George Wilson*, Durham, October 24, 1843.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SESSION OF 1844—FACTORY LEGISLATION—THE CONSTITUENCIES.

1844. Æt. 40.

The statistics of agitation sometimes raise a smile. The nice measurement of argumentative importunity in terms of weight and bulk, seems incongruous in connexion with anything so complex, so volatile, so invisibly rooted as opinion. We all know how at each annual meeting the listeners receive these figures of tracts, pamphlets, and leaflets with the same kind of enthusiasm with which a farmer surveys his mountains of quickening manure. At Manchester, in the autumn of 1843, the report was stupendous. Five hundred persons had been employed in distributing tracts from house to house. Five millions of such tracts had been delivered to parliamentary electors in England and Scotland; and the total distributed to non-electors and others had been upwards of nine millions. The weight of papers thus circulated was no less than one hundred tons. One hundred and forty towns had been visited, and there had been five and twenty meetings in the agricultural districts. It was resolved that the new campaign should be conducted with redoubled vigour. In October (1843), after a vehement contest, in which the Monopolist candidate was backed by all the influence of the Government, a Free Trader was returned for the city, and this great victory gave new heart to the movement throughout the country. Fifty thousand

pounds had been expended in the current year. A fund of a hundred thousand pounds was demanded for the year to come; and before the end of 1844 nearly ninety thousand pounds of that sum had actually been raised. Of this amount, nearly fourteen thousand pounds were subscribed at a single meeting in Manchester. Cobden had, at that time at any rate, supreme faith in the potency of this vast propagandism. He still believed that if you brought truth to people's doors, they must embrace it. Projects for the establishment of newspapers for the spread of the views of his school, always interested him keenly. The following letter to Mr. Bright describes the beginnings of one of the most excellent journals of the time:—

1844. Æt. 40.

"I wish I could have a little talk with you and Wilson about the removal of the Circular to London. James Wilson[1] has a plan for starting a weekly Free-trader by himself and his friends, to be superintended by himself. But he does not intend this unless he can have the support of the League, or at least its acquiescence. He has a notion that a paper would do more good if it were *not* the organ of the League, but merely their independent supporter. But then what is the League to do for an organ? If we start another weekly paper, it would clash with his. Villiers seems to have been rather taken with James Wilson's plan, and it would undoubtedly be desirable to have Wilson's pen at work. It is quite clear that the League must have its organ. The question for us to decide is what kind of paper shall we have? Is it to be simply a removal of the *Anti-Bread-Tax Circular* to London with the change of the title to the *League Circular* and to be still confined exclusively to the one object and movement of the

[1] Afterwards Secretary to the Treasury, and Financial Member of the Council of India. A most interesting account of Mr. Wilson is to be found in the *Literary Studies* of the late Walter Bagehot (vol. i. pp. 367—406.)

1844. League, or must we enlarge to a sixpenny paper, and whilst
ÆT. 40. keeping corn prominent, attack collaterally sugar, and coffee? If we stick to the Circular in its present character, then another Free-trade paper might be started; if we adopted the enlarged paper, then it would be folly in James Wilson to undertake another, and he would not attempt it."[1]

In the long-run Mr. Wilson started his own newspaper, which he called the *Economist*. The *Circular* was suppressed, and the *League* was published in its stead, conveying, as Cobden said, every syllable of their speeches to twenty thousand people in all the parishes of the kingdom. Before describing a more important move in the Manchester tactics, I have to say something of Cobden's action in Parliament, where a very momentous subject presently engaged attention.

In the session of 1844 the Corn Laws fell into the background. Mr. Cardwell, in seconding the motion on the Address, made a marked impression by a collection of evidence that trade was reviving. The revival of trade weakened the strongest argument of the agitators, because it diminished the practical urgency of their question. Parliament is always glad of an excuse for leaving a question alone, and the slightest improvement in the markets was welcomed as a reason for allowing the Corn Law to slumber. The Prime Minister took advantage of such a state of things to quell the sullen suspicion of the agricultural party, by emphatic declarations that the Government had never contemplated, and did not then contemplate, any alteration in the existing law. Repeal he hardly deigned to notice; it would, he said, produce the greatest confusion and distress. There was, no doubt, the alternative of a fixed duty; but if it should happen that the agriculturists should come to prefer that to his sliding scale, then he was inclined to think that,

[1] *To Mr. Bright*, June 21, 1843.

not he, but Lord John Russell would be the proper person 1844.
to make the change. So closely did Peel habitually trim Æt. 40.
his sails to suit the shifting of the winds.

In consequence of this declaration of the Minister, and of the improvement in the condition of the population, comparatively slight attention was paid to the discussion on Mr. Villiers's annual Motion (June 25). The League was violently abused by the Mileses, Bankeses, Ferrands, and Sir John Trollopes. It was again and again asserted that the rate of wages was regulated by the price of corn, and that the avowed object of the agitators was to lower wages by lowering corn. Cobden replied to such serious arguments as he could find in the course of the debate, but the front bench on the side of the Opposition was empty for most of the evening; Lord John Russell declined to vote; Mr. Bright was listened to with so much impatience that he was forced to sit down; and a very hollow performance ended with a majority of 204 against the Motion.[1]

In the earlier part of the session (March 12), Cobden had moved for a Select Committee to inquire into the effects of protective duties on agricultural tenants and labourers. This was a new approach. The main argument for repeal had hitherto been from the side of the manufacturing population. In what way, save by the admission of foreign corn in exchange for British manufactures, could we secure extended markets; or, in other words, extended demand for the industry of the people? Cobden now turned to the agricultural side of the question, and asked the House of Commons, as he had asked the farmers during the previous year, to examine what advantage the Corn Law had brought to the agriculturists themselves. He described the condition of the labourer, morally, socially, and economically; said that it was the fear of falling into this con-

[1] 328 against 124.

1844. dition which caused the strikes of the workmen in the
ÆT. 40. towns; and asked how a starved population of this kind could form that valuable class of domestic consumers, who were held out by the landlords to the manufacturers as adequate compensation for loss of customers abroad. The official duty of reply fell to Mr. Gladstone. His answer turned mainly on the inexpediency of assenting to a motion which would imply that the Corn Law was an open question, and which would therefore tend to unsettle trade, disturb the revenue, and increase the excitement in people's minds. At present, Mr. Gladstone said, the League was thought to be a thing of no great practical moment: its parade and ceremonial were perhaps the most important features about it; but if Parliament should take up the subject, then assuredly the League would acquire a consequence to which it had really no title. Cobden's motion was rejected by a vote of two hundred and twenty-four against one hundred and thirty-three, being a majority of ninety-one.

This bad division had perhaps less than the general feeling of the House, as gathered from talk in the lobbies, to do with the changed view which Cobden now took of the prospects of the cause. The ardour of his hopes was relaxed, though not the firmness of his resolution. He gave expression to this in writing to his brother:—

"It is now quite certain that our Free Trade labours must be spread over a larger space of time than we contemplated at one time. The agitation must be of a different kind to what we have hitherto pursued. In fact we must merely have just so many demonstrations as will be necessary to keep hold of public attention, and the work must go on in the way of registration labours in those large constituencies where we can hope to gain anything by a change of public opinion. The little pocket boroughs must be absolutely given over. They will not weigh as a feather in the settle-

ment of the question. *Time* can alone effect the business. 1844.
It cannot be carried by storm. We were wrong in thinking ÆT. 40.
of it. In the meantime Peel's unsettlements are making enemies in the ranks of the united monopolists, and everybody is making up his mind to more change. As my labours must henceforth be less intense than heretofore, I shall be able to give more attention to my private affairs, which, Heaven knows, have been neglected enough."[4]

The following passage relates to a subject which kindled more excitement in the country than any other question before Parliament. It was an episode in the endless battle between bigotry and the sense of justice. The judgment in the famous case of Lady Hewley's bequest, finally delivered after fourteen years of litigation, exposed endowments which had been for several generations in the hands of Unitarians, to the risk of appropriation by Trinitarian Dissenters. The Ministry brought in a Bill to confirm religious bodies, whether Trinitarian or Unitarian, in the possession of property of which they had been in the enjoyment for twenty years. This measure was regarded by fanatics, alike of the Episcopalian and the independent churches, as favouring the deadly heresy of Unitarianism. The storm raged with furious violence; but the Ministry held firm, and the Bill, which was conservative of the rights of property in the right sense, happily became law. Sir W. Follett's speech broke down the opposition. We may be sure on which side in the controversy Cobden was found.

"I never entertained an idea of voting for the monopolists in matters of faith. Nor have I had a line from anybody at Stockport to ask me to do so. As at present advised, I shall certainly vote for the Bill. What a spectacle we shall present, if the intolerance of the Commons should reject a measure which the Lords and the Bishops have passed! It

[4] *To F. W. Cobden*, London, June 4, 1844.

1844. would confirm one's notion that the Government of this
ÆT. 40. country is in advance of the people.

"Lord Duncan's reply to a deputation was not amiss. He told them drily, 'It may be a question whether the founders of the chapels in question intended them for the benefit of Unitarians or Trinitarians, but one thing is certain, they did not intend them for the *lawyers*, who will have every kick of them, unless the Bill is passed into a law.' This young chip of the old block who stood such hard knocking at Camperdown, said an equally good thing to the short-time delegates who called on him to abuse the factory masters. He told them to go home and thank God they had not the landlords for masters, for if they had, their wages would be reduced one-half."[5]

It is now time to turn briefly to a subject which sprang as directly as Free Trade itself from the great Condition of England Question. Throughout this memorable parliament, which sat from 1841 to 1847, we are conscious of a genuine effort, alike on the part of the Prime Minister and of independent reformers and philanthropists of all kinds, to grapple with a state of society which threatened to become unmanageable. We see the Parliament diligently feeling its way to one piece after another of wise and beneficent policy, winding up with the most beneficent of all. The development of manufactures, and the increase and redistribution of population which attended it, forced upon all the foremost minds of that time a group of difficulties with which most of them were very inadequately prepared to deal. One fact will be enough to illustrate the extent of the change. In 1818 it was computed that 57,000 persons were employed in cotton factories. Within twenty-one years their numbers had increased to 469,000. How was this vast

[5] *To F. W. Cobden*, London, June 5, 1844.

and rapid influx of population into the cotton towns, with all the new conditions which it implied, to be met? Or was it to the statesman indifferent? The author of *Sybil* seems to have apprehended the real magnitude and even the nature of the social crisis. Mr. Disraeli's brooding imaginativeness of conception gave him a view of the extent of the social revolution as a whole, which was wider, if it did not go deeper, than that of any other contemporary observer. To accidents of his position in society and necessities of personal ambition, it must, I suppose, be attributed that one who conceived so truly the seriousness of the problem, should have brought nothing better to its solution than the childish bathos of Young England. Mr. Carlyle, again, had true vision of the changes that were sweeping the unconscious nation away from the bonds and principles of the past into an unknown future. But he had no efficient instruments for controlling or guiding the process. He was right enough in declaring that moral regeneration was the one thing needful to set the distracted nation at ease. In a particular crisis, however, moral regeneration is no more than a phrase.

Cobden answered the question on the economic side. You must, he said, accept and establish the conditions of free exchange. Only on these terms can you make the best use of capital, and ensure the highest attainable prosperity to labour. But at this point—they were then close upon the ever-memorable date of '48—the gigantic question of that generation loomed on the horizon. How are you to settle the mutual relations of capital and labour to one another? Abolition of restriction may be excellent in the sphere of commodities. Is it so clear that the same condition suffices for the commonwealth, when the commodity to be exchanged is a man's labour? Or is it palpably false and irrational to talk of labour as a commodity? In other words, can the relations between labour and capital be

1844. safely left to the unfettered play of individual competition? ÆT. 40. The answer of modern statesmanship is, that unfettered individual competition is not a principle to which the regulation of industry may be entrusted. There may be conditions which it is in the highest degree desirable to impose on industry, and to which the general opinion of the industrial classes may be entirely favourable. Yet the assistance of law may be needed to give effect to this opinion, because, —in the words of the great man who was now preparing the exposition of political economy that was to reign all through the next generation,—only law can afford to every individual a guarantee that his competitors will pursue the same course as to hours of labour and so forth, without which he cannot safely adopt it himself.[6]

Cobden, as we have already seen (pp. 115-16), when he was first a candidate for Stockport, dissented from these theories. He could not adjust them to his general principle of the expediency of leaving every man free to carry his goods to whatever market he might choose, and to make the best bargain that he could. The man who saw such good reasons for distrusting the regulation of markets by Act of Parliament, was naturally inclined to distrust parliamentary regulation of labour. In the case of children, Cobden fully perceived that freedom of contract is only another name for freedom of coercion, and he admitted the necessity of legislative protection. He never denied that restrictions on the hours of labour were desirable, and he knew by observation, both at home and abroad, that the hours of labour are no measure of its relative productiveness. What he maintained was that all restrictions, however desirable, ought to be secured by the resolute demands and inde-

[6] J. S. Mill's *Political Economy* was not begun until 1845, but it bears abundant traces how closely he watched the course of legislation during the years immediately preceding.

pendent action of the workmen themselves, and not by intervention of the law.[7] 1844. Æt. 40.

Singularly enough, while he thus trusted to the independence of the workmen, he objected to workmen's combinations. "Depend upon it," he said to his brother, "nothing can be got by fraternizing with trades unions. They are founded upon principles of brutal tyranny and monopoly. I would rather live under a Dey of Algiers than a Trades Committee."[8] Yet without combination it is difficult to see how, on the great scale of modern industries, the workmen can exert any effective influence on the regulation of their labour. That in the first forms of combination there was both brutality and tyranny, is quite true. That these vices have almost disappeared is due in no small degree to an active fraternization, to use Cobden's own word, with the leaders of the workmen by members of the middle class, who represented the best moral and social elements in the public opinion of their time.

The protection of the labouring population had in various forms engaged the serious attention of Parliament for several years. So far back as 1802 there was a Factory Act, which was sanitary in its main intention, but also contained clauses regulating hours. Others followed in 1819 and 1825, and a very important factory law, containing the earliest provisions for education, was passed in 1833, by which time the workmen were partially able to make themselves heard in Parliament. In 1842 Lord Ashley had procured the passing of the Mines and Collieries Act, a truly admirable and beneficent piece of legislation, excluding women from labour underground, and rescuing children from conditions hardly less horrible than those of negro slavery. In 1843, still under the impulse of Lord Ashley, Sir James Graham brought

[7] See Appendix A, at the end of the volume.

[8] *To F. W. Cobden*, August 16, 1842.

1844. in a Factory Bill, not only regulating the hours of labour,
ÆT. 40. but proposing a system for the education of the children of the industrial class in the manufacturing towns. Cobden took an early opportunity of saying a friendly word for the education clauses of the measure, as being a step in the right direction. Popular education had been the most important of all social objects in his mind from the first; and in spite of drawbacks, which he did not despair of seeing amended, he saw more good than harm in the new proposals. These clauses, however, beyond doubt conferred advantages on the Established Church, in which the Dissenters justly and wisely refused to acquiesce.* It might well seem to be better that popular instruction should still be left to voluntary machinery for some time longer, than that new authority and new fields of ecclesiastical control should be opened to the privileged church. The opposition was so vehement that the education clauses were dropped, and the Bill withdrawn.

In 1844 Sir James Graham reintroduced it, without the education clauses, simply as a Bill for regulating the labour of children and young persons. The definition of a child was extended to mean children between nine and thirteen; a child was only to be employed half time, that is to say, not more than six and a half hours each day. The definition of young persons remained as it was, covering persons from thirteen to eighteen; their hours in silk, cotton, wool, and flax manufactories were not to exceed thirteen and a half in each day; and of these one hour and a half were to be allowed for meals and rest, leaving twelve hours as the limit of actual labour. Lord Ashley moved that the hours should be not twelve but ten, and on this issue the battle was fought.

* The provisions for trustees of the schools were undeniably and deliberately calculated to give the clergy of the Established Church a predominant power on every board.

The factory question from this time, down to the passing of the Ten Hours Act, was part of the wider struggle between the country gentlemen and the manufacturers. The Tories were taunted with the condition of the labourers in the fields, and they retorted by tales of the condition of the operatives in factories. The manufacturers rejoined by asking, if they were so anxious to benefit the workman, why they did not, by repealing the Corn Law, cheapen his bread. The landlords and the millowners each reproached the other with exercising the virtues of humanity at other people's expense. This was not Lord Ashley's own position. He was at this time in favour of the Corn Law, but his exertions for the factory population were due to a disinterested and genuine interest in their welfare. In 1842[1] Cobden took a more generous, or rather a more just, view of Lord Ashley's character than he had been accustomed to express in his letters and conversation. "He would confess very frankly that before he entered that House, he had entertained doubts, in common with many of the employers in the north, whether those advocates of the Short Hours Bill who supported the Corn Law were really sincere. But since he had had an opportunity of a closer observation of the noble lord, he was perfectly convinced of his genuine philanthropy." That, however, was no reason why Lord Ashley should not be resisted, if his philanthropy led him wrong; and Mr. Bright, while not denying that the hours of labour were longer than they ought to be, made a vigorous onslaught on him. "It was a perilous effort," Cobden wrote, "especially in the canting tone of the country, but our friend came off well, and there is much credit due to him for taking the bull by the horns. The Tories have gained nothing by the last week's debate."[2]

1844. ÆT. 40.

Charles Buller defended Lord Ashley's proposal in what

[1] July 8. [2] *To F. W. Cobden*, London, March 16, 1844.

1844. was a very wise speech, though it may have been made as a
ÆT. 40. party move against Peel. Brougham poured out a torrent of invective in the House of Lords against all interference with labour. Most of the official Whigs, on the contrary, went for the limitation of ten hours, though they had stoutly opposed the same proposal when they were in power; but in the end the Government carried their Act for twelve hours.

"I did not vote upon the Factory question," Cobden wrote. "The fact is the Government are being whipped with a rod of their own pickling. They used the ten hours' cry, and all other cries, to get into power, and now they find themselves unable to lay the devil they raised for the destruction of the Whigs. The trickery of the Government was kept up till the time of Ashley's motion, in the confident expectation that he would be defeated by the Whigs and Free Traders. They (the Government) were calculating upon this support, and so they gave liberty to Wortley and others of their party to vote against the Cabinet in order to get favour at the hustings. The Whigs very basely turned round upon their former opinions to spite the Tories. The only good result is that no Government or party will in future like to use the factory question for a cry. The last year's education question, and this year's ten hours Bill, will sicken the factions of such a two-edged weapon. One other good effect may be that men like Graham and Peel will see the necessity of taking anchor upon some sound principles, as a refuge from the Socialist doctrines of the fools behind them. But at all events good must come out of such startling discussions."[1]

It cannot be seriously denied that Cobden was fully justified in describing the tendencies of this legislation as socialistic. It was an exertion of the power of the State in its strongest form, definitely limiting in the interest of the

[1] *To F. W. Cobden*, March 23, 1844.

labourer the administration of capital. The Act of 1844 was only a rudimentary step in this direction. In 1847 the Ten Hours Bill became law. Cobden was abroad at the time, and took no part in its final stages. In the thirty years that followed, the principle has been extended with astonishing perseverance. We have to-day a complete, minute, and voluminous code for the protection of labour; buildings must be kept pure of effluvia; dangerous machinery must be fenced; children and young persons must not clean it while in motion; their hours are not only limited but fixed; continuous employment must not exceed a given number of hours, varying with the trade, but prescribed by the law in given cases; a statutable number of holidays is imposed; the children must go to school, and the employer must every week have a certificate to that effect; if an accident happens, notice must be sent to the proper authorities; special provisions are made for bakehouses, for lace-making, for collieries, and for a whole schedule of other special callings; for the due enforcement and vigilant supervision of this immense host of minute prescriptions, there is an immense host of inspectors, certifying surgeons, and other authorities, whose business it is "to speed and post o'er land and ocean" in restless guardianship of every kind of labour, from that of the woman who plaits straw at her cottage door, to the miner who descends into the bowels of the earth, and the seaman who conveys the fruits and materials of universal industry to and fro between the remotest parts of the globe. But all this is one of the largest branches of what the most importunate Socialists have been accustomed to demand; and if we add to this vast fabric of Labour legislation our system of Poor Law, we find the rather amazing result that in the country where Socialism has been less talked about than any other country in Europe, its principles have been most extensively applied.

1844. If the Factory Law was in one sense a weapon with which
ÆT. 40. the country party harassed the manufacturers, it was not long before Cobden hit upon a plan for retaliating. For two or three years the League had confined its operations to the creation of an enlightened public opinion on the subject of the Corn Laws. Then it began to work in the boroughs, and Cobden was able to say that never at any previous date had so much systematic attention, time, and labour been given to the boroughs in the way of registration. The power which had thus been given to the Free Trade party in nearly one hundred and fifty boroughs, was expected to make an immense, if not a decisive, difference in the next parliament. In the great county of Lancashire alone, such changes had been wrought by attention to the register, that it was calculated that a new election would only leave the monopolists five out of the six-and-twenty members for the entire province. It now occurred to Cobden that these constituencies could be dealt with even more effectually. In the last division, not a single county member had gone into the lobby with Mr. Villiers. Cobden's thought was to turn the counties by an indefinite increase of the constituencies. They were to be won through that section of the Reform Act which conferred the franchise in counties upon possessors of freehold property of the value of forty shillings a year. The landlords had already availed themselves to an immense extent of the Chandos clause. By the Chandos clause tenants at will, occupying at a yearly value of fifty pounds, had the franchise. The monopolists, in Cobden's words, worked this clause out; they applied themselves to qualifying their tenant-farmers for the poll, "by making brothers, sons, nephews, uncles—ay, down to the third generation, if they happened to live upon the farm—all qualify for the same holding, and swear, if need be, that they were partners in the farm, though they were no more

partners than you are. This they did, and successfully, and 1844.
by that means gained the counties." "But," Cobden con- ÆT. 40.
tinued, "there was another clause in the Reform Act, which we of the middle classes—the unprivileged, industrious men, who live by our capital and labour—never found out, namely, the forty-shilling freehold clause. I will set that against the Chandos clause, and we will beat them in the counties with it. . . . . There is a large class of mechanics who save their forty or fifty pounds; they have been accustomed perhaps to put it in the savings' bank. I will not say a word to undervalue that institution; but cottage property will pay twice as much interest as the savings' bank. Then what a privilege it is for a man to put his hands in his pockets, and walk up and down opposite his own freehold, and say, 'This is my own; I worked for it, and I have won it.' There are many fathers who have sons just ripening into maturity, and I know that parents are very apt to keep their property and the state of their affairs from their children. My doctrine is that you cannot give your son your confidence, or teach him to be entrusted with property, too early. When you have a son just coming to twenty-one years of age, the best thing you can do, if you have it in your power, is to give him a qualification for the county; it accustoms him to the use of property, and to the exercise of a vote, whilst you are living and can have some little judicious control over it if necessary."[4]

The reader will observe that Cobden's design was free from the sinister quality of manufactured voting. He supposed that men would acquire property in their own neighbourhood, the natural seat of their political interests and activity. What is politically mischievous in this franchise only happens when a number of strangers in possession of a factitious qualification invade a district and help to nullify the wishes

[4] Speech at Covent Garden, Dec. 11, 1844.

1844. and opinions of the majority of those who reside in it. Such
ÆT. 40. a practice as this seems at no time to have been in Cobden's contemplation. Still many people demurred. The plan wore the look of manufacturing votes; it seemed, they said, mechanical, unworthy, and barely legitimate. No, replied Cobden, there is nothing savouring of trick or finesse of any kind in it; the law and the constitution prescribe the condition; you have a *bonâ-fide* qualification, and are conforming to the law both in spirit and in fact. This was quite true, and no plan ever proposed by the League met with so unanimous a response from all parts of the kingdom. It took two hours a day to read the letters that came from every part of the country, all applauding the scheme. By the beginning of 1845 between four and five thousand new electors had been brought upon the lists in Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cheshire. Not less than two hundred and fifty thousand pounds were invested in these counties in the forty-shilling qualification. It was believed that eight or ten times as many persons in other parts of the country had taken Cobden's hint to qualify.

It was to be an immense enfranchisement, on old constitutional lines and secured by the spontaneous effort and civil spirit of the population itself. "Wherever there is a man above the rank of an unskilled labourer, whether a shopkeeper, a man of the middle class, or of the skilled working class that has not got a county vote, or is not striving to accumulate enough to get one, let us point the finger of scorn at him; he is not fit to be a freeman. It is an avenue by which we may reach the recesses of power, and possess ourselves of any constitutional rights which we are entitled to possess." In one of his speeches of that date, Cobden allowed it to be perceived that this great process had come into his mind not simply as a means of quickening the triumph of Free Trade, but as an agency

for effecting a deep and permanent political transformation. 1844.
"Some people," he said, "tell you that it is very dangerous Ær. 40.
and unconstitutional to invite people to enfranchise themselves by buying a freehold qualification. I say, without being revolutionary, or boasting of being more democratic than others, that the sooner the power in this country is transferred from the landed oligarchy, which has so misused it, and is placed absolutely—mind, I say absolutely—in the hands of the intelligent middle and industrious classes, the better for the condition and destinies of this country."*

Cobden's eloquent colleague, Fox, placed the movement deeper still, by dwelling on the moral elements that lay beneath it. If it was wise and good, he said, to endeavour to make all who could save their pittance become fundholders, it must be at least as prudent and just to induce them according to their proportion to become landholders also—joint shareholders in this lovely and fruitful country, which is their country as much as it is that of the wealthiest nobleman whose lands cover half a county. It would give them a tangible bond of connexion with society; it would put them in a position which was deemed necessary to citizenship in the republics of ancient days; and it was better adapted than anything else to cherish in them those emotions which best accord with consistency and dignity of character.

* Speeches, i. 256. Jan. 15, 1845.

CHAPTER XIV.

BASTIAT—NEW TACTICS—ACTIVITY IN PARLIAMENT—MAYNOOTH GRANT—PRIVATE AFFAIRS.

1845. ÆT. 41. It was in this year that Cobden made the acquaintance of a French thinker who has done more than any other of his countrymen to give vivid and imaginative colour to the principles which in England we usually call Cobden's. Bastiat was born in 1806. He lived on a meagre ancestral property on the banks of the Adour, in the remote obscurity of the Landes. For twenty years he had been almost solitary among his farms, studying the great economic writers, discussing them from time to time with the only friend he had, occasionally making a short journey, and always practising what Rousseau calls that rarest kind of philosophy which consists in observing what we see every day. By chance he fell on an English newspaper. He was amazed to find that a body of practical men in England were at the moment actually engaged, and engaged with the reasonable prospect of success, in pressing for that Free Trade of which he had only dared to dream as a triumph of reason possible in some distant future. For two years he watched the progress of the agitation with eager interest. As was natural, what he saw rapidly stirred in him a lively desire for a similar illumination in his own country. He sat down to write an account of the English movement. In the summer of 1845 he went to Paris to see his book through the press. With his long hair and unfashionable hat, his

rustic clothes and homely umbrella, he had the air of an 1845.
honest countryman come to see the marvels of the town. ÆT. 41.
But there was a look of thought on his square brow, a light in his full dark eye, and a keenness in his expression, which told people that they were dealing with an enthusiast and a man of ideas. Bastiat took the opportunity of being in Paris to push on to London, there to behold with his own eyes the men who had so long excited his wonder and his admiration. He hastened to the office of the League, with copies of his book in his hand. "They told me," he wrote to his friend, "that Cobden was on the point of starting for Manchester, and that he was most likely preparing for the journey at that moment. An Englishman's preparation consists of swallowing a beefsteak and thrusting two shirts into a carpet-bag. I hurried to Cobden's house, where I found him, and we had a conversation which lasted for two hours. He understands French very well, speaks it a little, and I understand his English. I explained the state of opinion in France, the results that I expect from my book, and so on." Cobden in short received him with his usual cordiality, told him that the League was a sort of free-masonry, that he ought to take up his quarters at the hotel of the League, and to spend his evenings there in listening to the fireside talk of Mr. Bright and the rest of the band. A day or two afterwards, at Cobden's solicitation, Bastiat went down to Manchester. His wonder at the ingenious methods and the prodigious scale of the League increased with all that he saw. His admiration for Cobden as a public leader grew into hearty affection for him as a private friend, and this friendship became one of the chief delights of the few busy years of life that remained to him.

There had never been any anxiety among the men of the League to stir foreign opinion. "We came to the conclusion," Cobden said, "that the less we attempted to

1846. persuade foreigners to adopt our trade principles, the
Æt. 41. better; for we discovered so much suspicion of the motives of England, that it was lending an argument to the protectionists abroad to incite the popular feeling against the Free Traders, by enabling them to say—'See what these men are wanting to do: they are partisans of Englishmen, and they are seeking to prostrate our industries at the feet of that perfidious nation.' . . . To take away this pretence we avowed our total indifference whether other nations became free traders or not: but we should abolish Protection for our own sakes, and leave other countries to take whatever course they liked best."[1] When Bastiat came to the work of agitation in his own country, he found all the difficulties that his friends of the League had foreseen.

His book, *Cobden et la Ligue,* came gradually into greater vogue as the movement grew more important, and when the hour of triumph came in England, Bastiat shared its glory in France, as one who had foreseen its importance at a time when no French newspaper had been courageous or intelligent enough to give its readers any information on a subject which was necessarily so unwelcome in a country of monopolies. Bastiat felt that the title of his book had perhaps wounded some of Cobden's fellow-workers, and among men less strenuous and single-minded he might have been right. He defended himself by the reflection that in France, and perhaps we are not very different in England, it is necessary that a doctrine should be personified in an individual. A great movement, he said, must be summed up in a proper name. Without the imposing figure of O'Connell the agitation in Ireland would have passed without notice in the French journals. "The human mind," he wrote to Cobden, "has need of flags, banners, incarnations, proper names; and this is more true in France than anywhere else. Who

[1] *Cobden to Mr. Van der Maeren.* Oct. 5, 1856.

knows that your career may not excite the emulation of some man of genius in this country?"[1] 1845. Æt. 41.

Bastiat was always conscious of the difference between Cobden's gifts and his own, and nobody knew better than himself how much more fit he was for a life of speculation than for the career of an agitator. But there was no one else in France to begin the work of propagandism and the organization of opinion. Cobden told him that the movement which had been made from those below to those above in England, ought in France to proceed in the opposite course. There they would do best to begin at the top. In France in 1846 they had scarcely any railways, and they had no penny postage. They were not accustomed to subscriptions, and still less were they accustomed to great public meetings. Worse than all this, the popular interest was at that epoch turned away from the received doctrines of political economy in the direction of Communism and Fourierism. These systems spoke a language infinitely more attractive to the imagination of the common people. Bastiat, fired by Cobden's example, set bravely to work to make converts among men of mark. Besides being a serious thinker, he had the gifts, always so valuable in France, of irony, of apt and humorous illustration, of pungent dialectic. The style and finish of the *Economic Sophisms*, in which he refuted the fallacies of Monopoly, are even declared to be worthy of the author of the *Provincial Letters*. But the movement did not prosper. At Bordeaux, indeed, where the producers of wine were eager for fresh markets, a free trade association was formed, and it throve. Elsewhere the cause made little way. Political differences ran so high as to prevent hearty co-operation on a purely economical platform. The newspapers were written by lads of twenty, with the ignorance and the

[1] Dec. 1845. *Œuv.* i. 117.

1845. ÆT. 41. recklessness proper to their age. They were conducted by men who were in close connexion with the politicians, so that everything in their hands became a question between Ministry and Opposition. Worst of all they were venal. Prejudice, error, and calumny were paid for by the line. One was sold to the Russians, another to Protection, this to the university, that to the bank. "Our agitation," Bastiat wrote to Cobden, "agitates very little. We still need a man of action. When will he arise? I cannot tell. I ought to be that man; I am urged to the part by the unanimous confidence of my colleagues, but I cannot. The character is not there, and all the advice in the world cannot make an oak out of a reed."[1] We know not what encouragement Cobden gave to his friend, for by an evil chance his letters to Bastiat were all destroyed. Their correspondence was tolerably constant, and if Bastiat was indebted to Cobden for the energy of his views on Free Trade, Cobden may well have had his own views strengthened and diversified by Bastiat's keen and active logic. Bastiat always said that he valued the spirit of free exchange more than free exchange itself, and Cobden had already been approaching this doctrine before Bastiat became his friend.

The League was now in the seventh year of its labours. In 1839 their subscriptions had only reached what afterwards seemed the modest amount of 5000*l.* The following year they rose to nearly 8000*l.* In 1843 the Council asked for 50,000*l.* and got it. In 1844 they asked for twice as much, and by the end of the year between 80,000*l.* and 90,000*l.* had been paid in. They were now spending 1000*l.* a week. In spite of the activity which was involved in these profuse supplies, the outlook of the cause was, perhaps,

[1] *Bastiat to Cobden.* Mar. 20, and April 20, 1847. *Œuv.* i. 156-9.

never less hopeful or encouraging. The terrible depression which had at first given so poignant an impulse to the agitation had vanished. Peel's great manipulation of the tariff had done something to bring about a revival of trade. Much more had been done by two magnificent harvests. Wheat which had been up at sixty-seven shillings when Cobden came into Parliament, and then at sixty-one shillings in 1843, was now down at forty-five. Trade and commerce were thriving. The revenue was flourishing. Pauperism had declined. The winter had lasted for five months and had been very rigorous, yet even the agricultural labourers had suffered less distress than in the winters before. This happy state of things was in fact a demonstration of the truth of what Cobden and his friends were struggling to impress upon the country, namely that a moderate price of food was a condition of good wages and brisk trade.[4] The plain inference from what had been going on for two years before men's eyes, was that every impediment in the way of

1845.
ÆT. 41.

[4] At a meeting held in Oldham, a workman got up in the body of the hall. He had been thinking, he said, on the subject of the Corn Laws for twenty years; as there was no possibility that he should ever see Sir Robert Peel, as he never came down into that neighbourhood, and as he, the speaker, could not bear the expense of a journey to London, he begged Mr. Cobden to convey to the Prime Minister the following train of thought:—"When provisions are high, the people have so much to pay for them that they have little or nothing left to buy clothes with; and when they have little to buy clothes with, few clothes are sold; and when there are few clothes sold, there are too many to sell; and when there are too many to sell they are very cheap; and when they are very cheap, there cannot be much paid for making them; and consequently the manufacturing working man's wages are reduced, the mills are shut up, business is ruined, and general distress is spread through the country. But when as now the working man has the said 25*s*. [the fall in the price of wheat] left in his pocket, he buys more clothing with it, ay, and other articles of comfort too, and that increases the demand for them, and the greater the demand, you know, makes them rise in price, and the rising in price enables the working man to get higher wages and the master better profits. This therefore is the way I prove that high provisions make lower wages, and cheap provisions make higher wages."—Quoted in Cobden's *Speeches*, i. 251.

1845. Æt. 41. abundant food was an impediment in the way both of the comfort of the population and the prosperity of national industry. What good harvests had done for two years, repeal of the Corn Law would help to do in perpetuity. "The present state of our finances and manufactures," said Cobden, at the beginning of 1845, "is an illustration of the truth of the Free Trade doctrines." Yet oddly enough, the very circumstances which showed that the Leaguers were right, made people for the moment less in earnest for the success of their programme. So long as times were good, the Ministers were safe and the League was powerless. Meetings were still thronged, and a great bazaar was opened at Covent Garden in the spring, which was a nine-days' wonder. This notwithstanding, there was a certain pause out of doors in the actuality of the struggle.

The change did not escape the acute observation of the League. They at once altered their tactics. The previous year had been devoted to agitation in the country. They now came round to the opinion that Parliament, after all, was the best place in which to agitate. "You speak with a loud voice," said Cobden, "when you are talking on the floor of the House; and if you have anything to say that hits hard, it is a very long whip and reaches all over the kingdom." It was in Parliament that they were best able to conduct an assault on the Monopolist citadel from a new side. They had tried in their short campaign to show the farmers themselves that Protection was no better for them than for other people. They now made a vigorous effort to bring the same thing home to the farmers' friends in Parliament. "It gives me increased hopes," Cobden wrote to his friend, George Combe, "to hear that you, who are a calm observer, think that we are making such rapid progress in our agitation. We who are in the whirl of it, can hardly form an opinion whether we are advancing or only revolving.

But I think there are symptoms that the enemy is preparing for a retreat. The squires in the House are evidently without confidence in themselves, while the farmers are losing all faith in their old protectors, and Peel is doing his best to shake the confidence of both landlords and tenants in any minister. Good will come out of this. People will be thrown back upon their own resources of judgment. In fact, the public will be taught to think for themselves. With respect to Mr. W., he and I are very friendly; I have had nothing but civility, and indeed kindness, at his hands ever since I came into the House. He is a man of very great kindliness of nature, full of *bonhomie* in fact. If he has a fault, it is in being too placable, possessing too much love of approbation, which makes him rather fond of praising people, especially his opponents. He is, however, upon the whole, a fine-hearted man."[5]

1845. Æt. 41.

In the midst of the general prosperity, there was one great interest which did not thrive: this was the interest of the tenant-farmer. Deputations waited upon the Prime Minister to tell him that the farmers in Norfolk were paying rent out of capital; that half the small farmers in Devonshire were insolvent, and the others were rapidly sinking to the same condition; that the agriculturists of the whole of the south of England, from the Trent to the Land's End, were in a state of embarrassment and distress.[6] There was scarcely a week in which these topics did not find their way into the Parliamentary debates. Cobden brought forward a motion for a Select Committee to inquire into the causes of the alleged agricultural distress. A few nights afterwards one of the country gentlemen in the House moved a resolution for affording relief to the landed interests in the application of surplus revenue. Then came a proposal from a

[5] *To George Combe.* London, Feb. 28, 1845.
[6] Cobden's *Speeches*, i. 261.

1845. League member for a Committee to find out what was really
ÆT. 41. the nature and amount of the peculiar burdens of which the landed interest had to complain. Mr. Bright moved for a Committee on the Game Laws. Mr. Villiers pressed his regular annual motion for total and immediate repeal. Lord John Russell introduced a string of nine resolutions, dealing with the Corn Laws, the law of parochial settlement, national education, and systematic colonisation, all with a view to the permanent improvement of the condition of the working class, and especially of the labourers in husbandry.

"Bright did his work admirably," says Cobden, "and won golden opinions from all men. His speech took the squires quite aback. At the morning meeting of the county members at Peel's, to decide upon the course to be taken, the Prime Minister advised his pack not to be drawn into any discussion by the violent speech of the member for Durham, but to allow the Committee to be granted *sub silentio!* This affair will do us good in a variety of ways. It has put Bright in a right position—shown that he has power, and it will draw the sympathy of the farmers to the League. The latter conviction seemed to weigh heavily upon the spirits of the squires. They seemed to feel that we had put them in a false position towards their tenants, and the blockheads could not conceal their spite towards the League. I pleaded guilty for the League to all they charged us with on this score."[7]

The result of these incessant challenges to the landlords and to the Ministers was a thorough sifting of the arguments, and the establishment of a perfectly clear and intelligible position. No Committee was granted, except Mr. Bright's, but discussion brought out the main facts as clearly as any Committee could have done. It became stamped on men's minds, that while abundant food stimulated manufactures and promoted the comfort of the whole body of workmen

[7] *To Mr. George Wilson.* London, Feb. 28, 1845.

and labourers, legislative protection was not saving, and could not save, the farmers. The contention, again, that the landlords were subjected to special burdens, and were therefore entitled to special exemptions, had completely broken down. The whole process went on under the closely attentive eyes of the Primé Minister. The year before, said Cobden, he had not penetrated the quality of his protectionist friends. This year they set up for themselves; they found out their weakness, and, what is more, they let Sir Robert find it out also.[8]

Cobden himself helped to the result by one of the most important speeches that he ever made. "We are certainly," he wrote to his wife, "taking more prominent ground this session than ever, and the tone of the farmers' friends is very subdued indeed. They never open their mouths if they can help it, and then they speak in a very humble strain. I am quite in a fidget about my speech on Thursday. You will think it very strange in an old hack demagogue like me, if I confess that I am as nervous as a maid the day before her wedding. The reason is I suppose that I know a good deal is expected from me, and I am afraid I. shall disappoint others as well as myself. I have sent for Mr. Lattimore, who came up and spent an evening with me, on purpose to give me a lesson about the farmers' view of the question."[9]

"I was terribly out of sorts with the task," he said, after it was all over, "and when I got up to speak, I was all in a maze." In fact, an intimate friend who had stood on many a platform with him, found him in the lobby, pale, nervous, and confident that he should break down in the middle of his speech. "No, you will not," said his friend; "your nervousness convinces me that you will make a better speech

[8] *Speeches*, i. 290.

[9] *To Mrs. Cobden.* March 11, 1845.

1845. Æt. 41. than you ever made before in your life." And that is what actually happened. In sending his wife a copy of the *Times* containing a report of his speech, Cobden wrote to her that everybody in the House on both sides spoke highly of it, and declared it to be his best. "But I don't think," he adds, "that it was as good as it ought to have been."[1] The Prime Minister had followed every sentence with earnest attention; his face grew more and more solemn as the argument proceeded. At length he crumpled up the notes which he had been taking, and was heard by an onlooker, who was close by, to say to Mr. Sidney Herbert, who sat next him on the bench, "*You* must answer this, for *I* cannot." And in fact Mr. Sidney Herbert did make the answer, while Peel listened in silence.[2]

This speech should be read in connexion with the companion speech made the year before, and already referred to (p. 293). Much of Cobden's speaking, and especially at this time, though never deficient in point and matter, was loose in its form and slipshod in arrangement. That it should be so, was unavoidable under the circumstances in which his addresses were made. These two speeches, on the contrary, show him at his best. They are models of the way in which a great case should be presented to the House of

[1] *To Mrs. Cobden.* March 14, 1845.

[2] In the course of his speech Mr. Sidney Herbert said that it was very distasteful to him, as a member of the agricultural body, to be always coming to Parliament "whining for protection." The expression was unlucky, and gave Mr. Disraeli the hint for one of his most pungent sallies. The agriculturists, he said, referring to Peel's inconsistencies, must not contrast too nicely the hours of courtship with the moments of possession. "There was little said now about the gentlemen of England; when the beloved object has ceased to charm, it is vain to appeal to the feelings. Instead of listening to their complaints, he sends down his valet, a well-behaved person, to make it known that we are to have no 'whining' here. Such is the fate of the great agricultural interest; that beauty which everybody wooed, and one deluded."

Commons, as well as admirable examples of effective selection, luminous arrangement, and honest cogency of reasoning in intricate and difficult matter. Besides all this, they show how completely Cobden had worked out the whole conception of economic policy and the whole scheme of statesmanship, of which the repeal of the Corn Law was only a detail and a condition precedent. Many of the subscribers to the League were no doubt only thinking that Free Trade would bring them new armies of good customers. The Whigs, on the other hand, while sincerely concerned for the social state of the realm, picked up the notion of Free Trade vaguely, along with education and colonization, as one remedy among others. Cobden alone seemed to discern what Free Trade meant, how it was being forced upon us by increase of population and other causes, and how many changes it would bring with it in the whole social structure. It was this commanding grasp of the entire policy of his subject, which gradually gave Cobden such a hold over the receptive intelligence of Sir Robert Peel that at last it amounted to a fascination that was irresistible.

Why are the farmers distressed? Cobden asked. Why are English farmers less successful than English manufacturers? Because they are working their trade with insufficient capital. Throughout England, south of the Trent and including Wales, the farmers' capital is not more than five pounds an acre, whereas for carrying on the business successfully it ought to be twice as much. How is it that in a country overflowing with capital, where every other pursuit is abounding with money, when money is going to France for railways and to Pennsylvania for bonds, when it is connecting the Atlantic with the Pacific by canals, and diving to the bottom of the Mexican mines for investments, it yet finds no employment in the most attractive of all spots, the soil of this country itself? The

1845. answer is plain. There is no security of tenure such as
ÆT. 41. will warrant men of capital in investing their money in the soil. But what is the connexion between this insecurity of tenure and agricultural protection? The reply is that the protectionist landowners are in a vicious circle. They think the Corn Laws are a great mine of wealth; they want voters to retain them, and therefore they will have dependent tenants on whom they may count at the elections. If they insist on having dependent tenants they will not get men of spirit and of capital. The policy reacts upon them. If they have not men of skill and capital they cannot have full provision and employment for the labourer. And then comes round the vicious close of the circle, pauperism, poor-rates, county-rates, and all the other "special burdens" of the landed interest—special burdens of their own express creation.[3] Their fundamental error lay in thinking that rents could only be kept up by Protection. Even if this had been true, Protection had become impossible, from the pressure of population. But it was not true.

To the farmers Cobden had never given a probable reduction of rents as one of the reasons for repealing the Corn Law. He told them something still more important. "Though I have not promised reduction of rent," he said, "I have, however, always maintained that with Free Trade in corn, and with moderate prices, if the present rents are to be maintained, it must be by means of a different system of managing property from that which you now pursue. You must have men of capital on your land; you must let your land on mercantile principles; you must not be afraid of an independent and energetic man who will vote as he pleases; you must give up inordinate game-preserving."[4]

[3] *Speeches*, i. 264-5.
[4] *Speeches*, i. 402-3. March 8, 1849.

This was the skeleton of Cobden's argument, and each 1845.
member of it was clothed with exactly the amount of ÆT. 41.
graphic illustrations from sound authorities that was calculated to bring the case effectively home. The representatives of the farmers were surprised to be told of many things, which they immediately wondered that they had not thought of before. The farmers of Kent, Suffolk, and Surrey, enjoyed a protection in their hops, but they had in return to pay for the protection on other articles which they did not produce. Those of Chester, Gloucester, and Wilts had an interest in protecting cheese, but they were heavily taxed for the oats and beans which they wanted for their beasts. The farmers in the Lothians had the benefit of a restrictive duty on wheat, but this was a trifle compared with the disadvantage of having to pay duty on linseed cake and other items of provender for cattle. Everybody, in short, was taxed for the benefit of everybody else. If the farmer derived so little good from protection, the labourer derived still less. Members were startled to be told that more goods had been exported to Brazil in a year than had been consumed in the same time by the whole agricultural peasantry and their families in England; that no labourer in England spent more than thirty shillings a year in manufactures, if the article of shoes were excepted; that the same class did not pay fifteen shillings a head per annum to the revenue, and that the whole of their contributions to the revenue did not amount to three quarters of a million a year. This, said Cobden triumphantly, is the pass to which thirty years of Protection have brought the agricultural interest. "There never was a more monstrous delusion than to suppose that that which goes to increase the trade of the country, and to extend its manufactures and commerce; that which increases our population, enlarges the number of your customers, and diminishes your burdens by multiplying the shoulders that are to bear them, and

1845. Æт. 41. giving them increased strength to bear them, can possibly tend to lessen the value of land."[8]

Mr. Disraeli once said that Free Trade was not a principle, it was an expedient. In Cobden's hands just the reverse is true; Free Trade is not an expedient; it is a principle, a doctrine, and a system. He is often charged with arguing his case too exclusively on the immediate exigencies of the situation. It was hardly possible for him to do otherwise. Neither the House of Commons nor the multitude at Covent Garden would have listened with patience to a lecture on international exchanges. But whenever he had a chance, Cobden took care to rest his argument on the importance of a free circulation in the currents of exchange. In his speech of the previous year, he had blamed Sir Robert Peel for promising cheap prices as the result of his tariff. The price of commodities, said Cobden, may spring from two causes:—a temporary, fleeting, and retributive high price, produced by scarcity; or a permanent and natural high price, produced by prosperity. The price of wool, for example, had been highest when the importation was greatest; it sprang from the prosperity of the consumers. Peel, therefore, took the "least comprehensive and statesmanlike view of his measures when he proposed to lower prices, instead of aiming to maintain them by *enlarging the circle of exchange.*" Prices would take care of themselves without detriment to the consumer, provided only that the stream of commodities were allowed to flow freely and without artificial interruption. (See below, vol. ii. 344.)

This important idea was probably far beyond the reach of most of Cobden's hearers. I know there are many

[8] *Speeches*, i. 382. Some extremely interesting supplementary criticisms on Cobden's view of the effects of Protection on agricultural interests are to be found in Mr. Fawcett's *Free Trade and Protection*, pp. 37—47.

heads, he once said, who cannot comprehend and master a proposition in political economy, for I believe that that study is the highest exercise of the human mind, and that the exact sciences require by no means so hard an effort.[6] If, however, Cobden's economic language was a desperate jargon to the country gentlemen, it came with the power of revelation to their leader. "Sir Robert Peel," said Mr. Disraeli, in his subtle and striking portrait of his great enemy, "had a dangerous sympathy with the creations of others. He was ever on the look-out for new ideas, and when he did so he embraced them with eagerness and often with precipitancy. Although apparently wrapped up in himself and supposed to be egotistical, except in seasons of rare exaltedness, as in the year 1844-5, he was really deficient in self-confidence. There was always some person representing some theory or system exercising an influence over his mind. In his 'sallet days' it was Mr. Horner or Sir Samuel Romilly; in later and more important periods it was the Duke of Wellington, the King of the French, Mr. Jones Loyd, some others, and finally Mr. Cobden."[7]

1845. ÆT. 41.

It was in this session that Mr. Disraeli first opened his raking fire upon the Prime Minister. In 1842, as has been already seen (p. 239), he declared that Peel's policy was in exact, permanent, and perfect consistency with the principles of Free Trade laid down by Mr. Pitt. But clouds had risen on the horizon since then. Things had happened which made the rising gladiator change his mind, not as to the national expediency of Free Trade, but as to the personal expediency of carrying his sword to the opposite camp. Sir Robert, soon after coming into power, observed to a friend that he knew too little of the young men of the party, and expressed a wish to know more. The friend invited him to dinner, and among the men of promise who

[6] *Speeches*, i. 388. Feb. 27, 1846. [7] *Lord George Bentinck*, p. 221.

1845. were presented to their chief was Mr. Disraeli. Peel, one
ÆT. 41. of the most formal and even pedantic of men, was repelled by the extravagant dress, the singular mannerism, the unbusinesslike air of the strange genius who sat at table with him. Nothing came of the interview, and the mortified aspirant had to bide his time. In 1845 Mr. Disraeli felt, as he afterwards said, that Protection was in the condition in which Protestantism had been in 1828. With a shrewder instinct than Peel, he scented the elements of a formidable and destructive mutiny. Success was not certain, but it was possible enough to be worth trying. With unparalleled daring he hastened to sound the attack. In the session of 1845 Peel seemed to be at the height of his power. Yet this was the session in which Mr. Disraeli mocked him as a fine actor of the part of the choleric gentleman; as the great parliamentary middleman, who bamboozled one party and plundered the other; as the political Petruchio, who had tamed the Liberal shrew by her own tactics; as the Tory who had found the Whigs bathing and stolen their clothes. "For my part," he said on one of these occasions, "if we are to have Free Trade, I, who honour genius, prefer that such measures should be proposed by the member for Stockport, rather than by one who by skilful parliamentary manœuvres has tampered with the generous confidence of a great people and a great party."

Yet Mr. Disraeli, whose sagacity was always of far too powerful a kind to allow him to blink facts, knew very well, as he afterwards said, that practically for the moment the Conservative Government was stronger at the end of the session of 1845 than even at the commencement of the session of 1842. "If they had forfeited the hearts of their adherents, they had not lost their votes; while both in Parliament and the country they had succeeded in appropriating a mass of loose, superficial opinion, not trammelled

by party ties, and which complacently recognized in their 1845.
measures the gradual and moderate fulfilment of a latitu- Ær. 41.
dinarian policy both in Church and State." The same keen observer goes on to remark of those with whom we are immediately concerned, that in spite of their powers of debate and their external organization, the close of the session found the members of the Manchester confederacy reduced to silence. The state of prices, of the harvests, of commerce had rendered appeals varied even by the persuasive ingenuity of Mr. Cobden a wearisome iteration.[8]

Cobden himself, however, knew exactly how things stood, and foresaw with precision how they would move. In the summer of 1845, when Parliament had found his appeal a wearisome iteration, he had before him one of those immense multitudes, such as could only be assembled, he said, in ancient Rome to witness the brutal conflicts of men, or as can now be found in Spain to witness the brutal conflicts of animals. What, he asked, if you could get into the innermost minds of the Ministers, would you find them thinking as to the repeal of the Corn Laws? "I know it as well as though I were in their hearts. It is this: they are all afraid that this Corn Law cannot be maintained—no, not a rag of it, during a period of scarcity prices, of a famine season, such as we had in '39, '40, and '41. They know it. They are prepared when such a time comes, to abolish the Corn Laws, and they have made up their minds to it. There is no doubt in the world of it. They are going to repeal it," he went on, "as I told you—mark my words—at a season of distress. That distress may come; aye, three weeks of showery weather when the wheat is in bloom or ripening, would repeal these Corn Laws."[9] You cannot call statesmanship, he scornfully argued, a policy which leaves the industrial scheme of such a country as ours to stand

[8] *Life of Bentinck*, p. 7. [9] *Speeches*, i. 292, 299.

1845. or fall in such a way as this on the cast of a die. It was
ÆT. 41. not long before events put Cobden startlingly in the right.

The great popular agitation of the year, as it happened, was caused by a measure which touched a very different kind of sensibility. This session Peel introduced the memorable proposal for the augmentation of the grant to the Catholic College at Maynooth. That laudable measure was a small detail in the policy of breaking up the old system of Ascendancy—a policy made necessary by the revolution of Catholic Emancipation, in which Peel had assisted in so remarkable a way. Unfortunately, Peel never saw, what clear-sighted men like Lord Clare saw at the time of the Union, that the tenure of land was the only real object of interest to the people to whom he had given political emancipation. His attitude in reference to the Encumbered Estates Act showed that he did not possess the key to the Irish question. But his views on the solution of the religious difficulty were thoroughly statesmanlike, so far as that particular difficulty went. Nothing that he ever did showed greater courage than the Maynooth grant; for though he carried his second reading by the enormous majority of 147, Mr. Gladstone was undoubtedly right when he reluctantly affirmed that the minority represented the prevailing sense of a great majority of the people of England and Scotland.[1] The principles on which Peel defended the increased grant to Maynooth, pointed very directly towards a scheme for the endowment of the Catholic clergy. It was for this reason, among others, that Lord John Russell supported the increased grant. "The arguments," he said, "which are so

[1] Mr. Gladstone had resigned the office of President of the Board of Trade at the beginning of the Session, on the rather singular ground that while he approved of the Maynooth grant and was going to support it, he had once written a book in which a different view of the proper relations between State and Church had been laid down. "As a general rule, those who have borne solemn testimony on great constitutional questions, ought not to be parties to proposing a material departure from them."

sound, and as I think so incontrovertible, for an endowment for the education of the Roman Catholic priesthood, would prove on another occasion equally sound and incontrovertible for an endowment to maintain that priesthood." It is doubtful whether any Liberal leader will ever again be able to take what was once so wise and just a position, but there is still room for the position which Cobden took. Mr. Bright opposed the grant altogether, on the ground that no purely ecclesiastical institution should be paid for out of the public taxes. Cobden, on the contrary, both spoke and voted for the Ministerial Bill. He was unable to find in it anything relating to the endowment of the Catholic clergy: what he voted for was simply and purely an extended educational grant. What objection could there be to giving a good education, in any manner in which it can be most effectually given, to a body of men who are to be the instructors of many millions of people? You give large grants to elementary schools in Ireland; you vote money to the university, from which the Catholic clergy cannot benefit; but if you support instruction to Roman Catholics at all, it is wise and politic to give it to the clergy before every other order. On the merits he would support the proposal, and he would do so all the more cheerfully on the ground that it was acceptable to the Irish people.[1] This is as wise as political wisdom can be, but the present state of the Irish University question looks as if Mr. Bright's view, and not Cobden's, had won the day.

The following extracts from letters to his wife will show how Cobden passed the time from day to day, during this anxious and wearisome session:—

"*London, Feb.* 11, 1845.—I met Lord Howick [the

[1] April 18. In twenty-five years Cobden and Mr. Bright only went twice into different lobbies. This was one occasion. The other concerned the expenditure at South Kensington. Cobden as a Commissioner for the Great Exhibition supported Prince Albert's policy.

1845. Æт. 41. present Earl Grey] at dinner, as was told you by Miss Bright. He did not convert me to Whiggery, nor did he make any attempt upon my virtue. He is in very good temper with the League, and quite disposed to help us, and to throw the fixed duty overboard. Bright made a very powerful but rasping speech the other night. The milk-and-water people will find fault with him, but he is a noble fellow, and ought to be backed up by every genuine Free-trader."

"*April* 11.—We are all being plagued to death with the fanatics about the Maynooth grant. The dissenters and the church people have joined together to put the screw upon the members. However, I expect that Peel will carry his measure by a large majority."

"*April* 14.—We are still being very much persecuted by the fanatics; all the bigots in the country seem to be using the privilege of writing their remonstrances to me."

"*April* 28.—I can't fix the day, I am sorry to say, when I shall positively see you. There is a notice of motion standing by Lord John Russell upon the state of the labouring population, which I am almost compelled to take a part in. If I were to be absent, it would be construed into a slight on the Whig party. It stands for Friday, but I am not without hope that he may put it off till after the Whitsun holidays. I will learn his views to-morrow if I can."

"*June* 19.—On Wednesday I was to speak at Covent Garden, and being confined all the day in the Committee-room, and having to prepare my speech after four o'clock, I knew I should be excused writing. I find it very difficult to get up my spirits to appear before a large audience like that at Covent Garden. Indeed I feel myself to be only acting a part, in appearing to speak with energy, hope, and confidence. I can't go through another period such as the present session, to be harassed and annoyed as I

have been in every possible way; it would kill me. I have not the least idea when I shall be released from my attendance at the Committee. To-day we have been bored with a three hours' speech from a counsel, who would have nothing else to do if he released us from our confinement. I expect we shall have another week of it at least."

"*June* 20.—Now I will give you a specimen of my day's work. Our Committee meets at twelve and sits till four. Then the House commences, and lasts on an average till twelve. Twice last week I sat till two o'clock in the House, having been under the roof for fourteen hours. Next morning I can't be down till nine o'clock, and scarcely have I got breakfast, and glanced at the Votes and Proceedings for the day, when I must start again for the House. You will, I think, excuse me after this, if I am not a very good correspondent."

"*June* 24.—There never was such a case of petty persecution as I am enduring in this Railway Committee! We have been now nearly five weeks sitting, hearing witnesses, and listening to the tedious harangues of counsel about a lot of paltry lines among the little towns and villages in Norfolk and Suffolk. I thought we should have got to the end of our work in a fortnight or three weeks, but now we are threatened with another week or ten days. And the great misfortune is, that we have no power to put any restraint upon the tongues of the counsel, who are paid in proportion to the length of time they can waste. But I have made up my mind to go down to Manchester on Friday night at any rate, although I shall be obliged to come up again on Sunday night, to be here in the Committee at twelve o'clock."

"*June* 26.—The meeting at Covent Garden was as usual a bumper, but I did not think the speaking was quite up to the mark. I have had a successful motion for a

1845. Commission to inquire into the subject of the Railway
Æt. 41. gauges. I moved it again yesterday as a substantive motion, and it was agreed to by all parties. It is well to do something practical in the House occasionally, as it gives one the standing of a man of business."

Over all these busy interests hung a heavy cloud of the gloomiest thoughts. Throughout the session Cobden's mind had been harassed almost beyond endurance by a host of dark cares; and it is only by knowing what these amounted to, that we can measure the intensity of a devotion to public concerns which could sustain itself unabated under this galling pressure. The following extracts from letters to his brother will suffice to show us what was going on. At the end of the session of 1844, he had allowed a groan to escape him, extorted by the reports which his brother had sent him of the state of their business :—"I shall have a month or two for private business, and, Heaven knows, it is not before it is required. It is a dog's life I am leading, and I wish I could see my way out of the collar."[3] But in the recess of 1844, as in that of the previous year, he had been speedily dragged back from his own affairs to those of the League and the country. Throughout the spring of 1845, however, things were rapidly approaching a crisis from which there seemed to be no escape :—

"*April* 7.—I shall certainly be down a week before the Whitsuntide holidays, so as to have at least a fortnight. The fidgets have so got possession of me that I cannot master them. For the first time I feel fairly down and dead-beaten. It is of no use writing all one feels. Entreat J. S. to work down the stock of odds and ends of cloth, and keep down everything as low as possible. And remind Charles again of the critical importance of finding something for the machinery to do in the interval between the seasons. It is of

[3] *To F. W. Cobden.* Leamington, 8th August, 1844.

no use your writing bad news to me. I can't help it while here." 1845. Ær. 41.

"*April* 18.—I do not see any difficulty in giving adequate attention to the business, and still retaining, ostensibly at all events, the same public position as heretofore. But whether this can be done or not, I shall of course make everything else subservient to the one point in which honour is involved. There is no doubt that our pattern department, so far as the home trade is concerned, has been a failure this spring. This is now irremediable, and it is of no use dwelling on it. But it cannot be overlooked in any estimate of the management at the works and the warehouse, and of the cause of failure."

"*May* 26.—I am fixed in the Norfolk Committee to-day, and do not feel the least chance of being released for a week, and it may be a month; and for this there is no help, for if I were to leave for twenty-four hours, the Sergeant-at-Arms would be after me."

"*June* 6.—I am sorry to say it is impossible for me to come down even for a day. Our Committee have determined to sit on Saturdays, and the rule of the House precludes me from being absent even for an hour. God only knows when this odious Committee will come to a close. If you should wish to say anything about money-matters, write to me. If you want a little temporary assistance, pray see Mr. ——, and give him a message from me to the effect that I shall feel obliged if he will try to get a few thousand pounds in a similar manner to the former transaction.

"But when I come down after the Session, we must put our business upon a different footing, so as to be able to avoid troubling anybody. I would have written to ——, but really, in my prominent position, it is a very delicate matter to write about. You had better, therefore, take an opportunity of seeing him privately, and pray beg him to

1846. treat the matter as very confidential. I have so many
ÆT. 41. vigilant foes, that a whisper about my credit would be exaggerated a thousandfold."

"*June* 19.—Your letters keep me on the tenter-hooks, for I know not in what extremity you may be placed. I am in the same predicament as ever. The committee will in all probability last a week more. To-day we have been treated to a three hours' speech by a counsel upon a mere fraction of the group. What makes it more difficult to escape is that the committee does not give a decision on any part until we have heard the whole, and consequently nobody not acquainted with the evidence already taken could step in to fill my place. Sir Benjamin Hall, very luckily for him, was pitched from his horse on his head the second day of our meeting, and he was excused from further attendance, and as we have nobody else in his place and as four are the quorum, we can't proceed to business in the absence of one."

"*June* 24.—I will try to put off any meeting of the committee on Saturday, so as to be able to come down on Friday night, but I shall be obliged to be in town again on Monday morning by twelve. I see no end to this tedious affair. We have an appointment for another branch to begin on Monday. The truth is, the rival schemes fight for time, in order to delay the passing of the bills during the present session. But I will at all risks come down on Friday afternoon by the express train which will land me in Manchester at ten o'clock, and I should like to have a bed at your lodgings, and there I must see John Brooks privately on the Saturday morning. I have turned the subject over in every way, and I see no other solution of it than in absolutely withdrawing myself from public life, first having secured such a promise of support from some of my friends as shall secure me from the effects of the shock. I have made up my mind to this,

and shall not have a moment's peace of mind until I have fairly got out of my present false position. In fact, I would not go through another four months like the past for any earthly consideration whatever." 1845. ÆT. 41.

A friend of Cobden's, who was engaged in the same business, has told me how he received a message one afternoon in the winter before this, that Cobden wished to see him. He went over to the office in Mosley Street, and found him on the edge of dark sitting with his feet on the fender, looking gloomily into the languishing fire. He was evidently in great misery. Cobden had sent for him to seek his advice how to extricate himself from the difficulties in which his business had become involved. They summoned a second friend to their sombre councils. There was no doubt either of the seriousness of the position or of the causes to which it was due. His business, they told him, wanted a head. If he persisted in his present course, nothing on earth could keep him from ruin. He must retire from public life, and must retire from it without the loss of a day. Cobden struggled desperately against the sentence. The battle, he said, was so momentous, and perhaps so nearly won. One of his counsellors asked him how he could either work or rest with a black load like this upon his mind. "Oh," said Cobden, "when I am about public affairs I never think of it; it does not touch me; I am asleep the moment my head is on the pillow."

A few months later the difficulty could no longer be evaded. In September Cobden, at the cost of anguish which we may imagine, came to the terrible resolution to give up public affairs. He wrote a letter, describing his position and the resolve to which it had driven him, to the friend who had for four unresting years been his daily comrade and fellow-soldier, and whose mere presence at his side, he

1845. once said, was more to him than the active support of a
ÆT. 41. hundred other men. Mr. Bright was then travelling in Scotland. The letter found him one evening at a hotel in Inverness. It was the wettest autumn in the memory of man, and the rain came over the hills in a downpour that never ceased by night or by day. It was the rain that rained away the Corn Laws. Cobden begged of Mr. Bright to burn what he had written, and the injunction was obeyed. It was a beautiful letter, Mr. Bright has said: surely we may say no less of the reply:—

"Inverness, *September 20th*, 1845.

"MY DEAR COBDEN,—I received your letter of the 15th yesterday evening, on my arrival here. Its contents have made me more sad than I can express; it seems as if this untoward event contained within it an affliction personal for myself, great public loss, a heavy blow to one for whom I feel a sincere friendship, and not a little of danger to the great cause in which we have been fellow-labourers.

"I would return home without a day's delay, if I had a valid excuse for my sisters who are here with me. We have now been out nearly three weeks, and may possibly be as much longer before we reach home; our plan being pretty well chalked out beforehand, I don't see how I can greatly change it without giving a sufficient reason. But it does not appear needful that you should take any hasty step in the matter. Too much is at stake, both for you and for the public, to make any sudden decision advisable. I may therefore be home in time for us to have some conversation before anything comes before the public. Nothing of it shall pass my lips, and I would urge nothing to be done till the latest moment, in the hope that some way of escape may yet be found. I am of opinion that your retirement would be tantamount to a dissolution of the League; its main-

spring would be gone. I can in no degree take your place. As a second I can fight; but there are incapacities about me, of which I am fully conscious, which prevent my being more than a second in such a work as we have laboured in. Do not think I wish to add to your trouble by writing thus; but I am most anxious that some delay should take place, and therefore I urge that which I fully believe, that the League's existence depends mostly upon you, and that if the shock cannot be avoided, it should be given only after the weightiest consideration, and in such way as to produce the least evil.

"Be assured that in all this disappointment you have my heartfelt sympathy. We have worked long and hard and cordially together; and I can say most truly that the more I have known of you, the more have I had reason to admire and esteem you, and now when a heavy cloud seems upon us, I must not wholly give up the hope that we may yet labour in the good cause until all is gained for which we have striven. You speak of the attempts which have been made to raise the passion which led to the death of Abel, and to weaken us by destroying the confidence which was needful to our successful co-operation. If such attempts have been made, they have wholly failed. To help on the cause, I am sure each of us would in any way have led or followed; we held our natural and just position, and hence our success. In myself I know nothing that at this moment would rejoice me more, except the absence of these difficulties, than that my retirement from the field could in any way maintain you in the front rank. The victory is now in reality gained, and our object will before very long be accomplished; but it is often as difficult to leave a victory as to gain it, and the sagacity of leaders cannot be dispensed with while anything remains to be done. Be assured I shall think of little else but this distressing turn

1845. Æt. 41. of affairs till I meet you; and whilst I am sorry that such should be the position of things, I cannot but applaud the determination you show to look them full in the face, and to grapple with the difficulties whilst they are yet surmountable.

"I have written this letter under feelings to which I have not been able to give expression, but you will believe that

I am, with much sympathy and esteem,
Your sincere friend,
JOHN BRIGHT."

The writer, however, felt the bad tidings lying too heavily on him to be able to endure inaction. A day or two later Mr. Bright changed his plans and hastened southwards. Helpful projects revolved in his mind, as he watched the postboys before him pressing on through the steaming rain. When he reached Manchester, he and one or two friends procured the sum of money which sufficed to tide over the emergency. For the moment Cobden was free to return to the cause which was now on the eve of victory.

CHAPTER XV.

THE AUTUMN OF 1845.

THE story of the autumn of 1845 has often been told, and it is not necessary that it should be told over again in any detail in these pages. It constitutes one of the most memorable episodes in the history of party. It was the turning-point in the career of one of the most remarkable of English Ministers. It marked the decisive step in the greatest of all revolutions in our commercial policy. And it remains the central incident in the public life of the statesman who is the subject of these memoirs. 1845. ÆT. 41.

In his powerful speech in 1844 Cobden had reminded the House of Commons, for men were apt to forget it, he said, that in Ireland there was a duty at that day of eighteen shillings a quarter upon the import of foreign wheat. Will it be believed in future ages, he cried, that in a country periodically on the point of actual famine—at a time when its inhabitants subsisted on the lowest food, the very roots of the earth—there was a law in existence which virtually prohibited the importation of bread?[1] The crisis had now arrived. The session was hardly at an end before disquieting rumours began to come over from Ireland. As the autumn advanced, it became certain that the potato crop was a disastrous failure. The Prime Minister had, in his own words, devoted almost every hour of his time, after

[1] *Speeches*, i. 164.

1845. ÆT. 41. the severe labours of the session, to watching chances and reading evidence night and day, in anticipation of the heavy calamity which hung over the nation. By the middle of October the apprehension of actual scarcity had become very vivid, and he wrote to Sir James Graham that the only effectual remedy was the removal of impediments to import. On the last day of the month, the members of the Cabinet met in great haste. Three other meetings took place within the week. A marked divergence of opinion instantly became manifest. Sir Robert Peel wished to summon Parliament, and to advise the suspension for a limited period of the restrictions on importation. Lord Aberdeen, Mr. Sidney Herbert, and Sir James Graham supported this view. The other members of the Cabinet, following Lord Stanley and the Duke of Wellington, dissented. Peel did not disguise, and the dissidents were well aware, how difficult it might be to put the corn duties on again if they had once been taken off. It was felt on both sides that the great struggle which had been going on ever since the Whigs proposed their fixed duty, and in which Peel had shown so many ominous signs of change, was now coming to an issue. On both sides there was a natural reluctance to precipitate it. On the 6th of November Ministers separated without coming to a decision.

A skilful enemy was intently watching their proceedings from the northern metropolis. On the 22nd of November Lord John Russell launched from Edinburgh his famous letter to his constituents in the City of London. He had seen in the public prints that Ministers had met; that they had consulted together for many days; and that nothing had been done. Under these circumstances he thought that the Government were not performing their duty to their Sovereign and their country. The present state of the country could not be viewed without apprehension. Pro-

crastination might produce a state of suffering that was frightful to contemplate, but bold precaution might avert serious evils. It was no longer worth while to contend for a fixed duty. Let them all then unite to put an end to a system which had been proved to be the blight of commerce, the bane of agriculture, the source of bitter division among classes, the cause of penury, fever, mortality, and crime among the people. If this end was to be achieved, it must be gained by the unequivocal expression of the public voice. 1845. Ær. 41.

The Edinburgh Letter was the formal announcement that Lord John Russell had come round to Cobden's programme, the winning of Free Trade by agitation. Sir Robert Peel's conversion, as everybody knows, was very freely imputed both at the time and afterwards to interested and ambitious motives. It is hard to understand on what ground the same imputation might not have been sustained in the case of the corresponding conversion of Lord John. The obvious truth is that they were both of them too clear-sighted not to perceive that events had, at last, shown that Cobden and his friends were in the right, and that the time had come for admitting it. Lord John Russell's adhesion made the victory of the League certain. Mr. Bright happened to be on the platform at a railway station in Yorkshire, as Lord John Russell passed through on his way from the north to Osborne. He stepped into the carriage for a few moments. "Your letter," said Mr. Bright, "has now made the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Law inevitable; nothing can save it." The letter had in fact done no less than this.

Immediately on its publication Sir Robert Peel summoned his Cabinet. His view had been that Parliament ought to be called together, on the assumption that the measure of relief which he was prepared to introduce would virtually

1845. compel a reconsideration of the whole question of Pro-
Ær. 41. tection. After the Edinburgh Letter he considered that this step would appear to be a servile acquiescence in the views of the leader of the Opposition. Still he was prepared to stand to his post, and to run the risk of this reproach, provided that his colleagues were unanimous. They were not so. Lord Stanley was intractable, and others in the Government were nearly as hostile. Thinking, therefore, that he should fail in the attempt to settle the question, and that after vehement contests and the new combinations that would be formed, probably worse terms would be made than if some one else were to undertake the settlement of the question, the Minister felt it his duty to resign. That event took place on the 5th of December. For a fortnight the country remained without a responsible Administration.

The share of the League in this startling catastrophe did not escape Cobden's eye. The prospect of famine in Ireland had no sooner become definite, than the League at once prepared for action. Before the end of October, and before the first of the Cabinet Councils, they held a great meeting of many thousands of persons at Manchester, and announced a series of meetings in the other great towns of the kingdom. The Ministers were quite aware what this meant, and that they could not face it. Sir James Graham warned Peel that the Anti-Corn-Law ferment was about to commence. It would, he said, be the most formidable movement in modern times. There was a pause for a few days during the deliberations of the Government, because everybody expected that each successive mail would carry to him the welcome decision of the Cabinet that the ports had been already opened. And why were they not opened? asked Cobden. Because the League was known to be strong enough to prevent them from being shut again. If there had been no Anti-Corn-Law League in the middle of November, the ports

would have been opened a month ago. It was because 1845.
they knew well in the Cabinet, and because the landlords ÆT. 41.
knew well, that the question of total and immediate repeal of the Corn Law was at stake, that they were ready to risk, like desperate gamblers, all that might befall during the next six months, rather than part with that law.[2] When the Cabinets came to an end without any action being taken, then genuine alarm spread through the country, and the storm of agitation began in good earnest. People knew pretty well where the difficulty lay. They were told that it was the Duke of Wellington and Lord Stanley who had decided that the people of England and Ireland should not be allowed to feed themselves. Cobden went to a great gathering at Birmingham (November 13th). If I mistake not, he said, you have tried the metal of the noble warrior before in Birmingham. The Duke is a man whom all like to honour for his high courage, his firmness of resolve, his indomitable perseverance. "But let me remind him," cried Cobden, amid a storm of strenuous and persistent approval, "that notwithstanding all his victories in the field, he never yet entered into a contest with Englishmen in which he was not beaten." Even the Edinburgh Letter, in spite of Cobden's trust in the high integrity of the writer, did not disarm his vigilance. The letter had transformed Lord John "from the most obscure into the most popular and prominent man of the day." But the Whig party was nothing without the Free Traders. The Tory party was broken to atoms by the rupture among their leaders. The League alone stood erect and aloft amid the ruins of the factions.[3]

The activity of the League was incessant. Now that their question had become practically urgent, and an occasion for the fall of ministries and the strife of parties,

[2] *Speeches*, i. 328. Nov. 13, 1845.
[3] *Speeches*, i. 349. Dec. 17.

1845. public interest in their proceedings acquired a new keenness.
ÆT. 41. "I had reckoned upon getting home on Saturday," Cobden writes to his wife from Stroud (Dec. 4), "but Lord Ducie has put the screw upon us. We have no alternative but to sleep at his house on Saturday night, in order to attend a meeting on the afternoon at his neighbouring town of Wooton-under-Edge. We could not resist his appeal. This throws me out in my plans, and I shall not see you till Wednesday. We shall go up to London on Sunday afternoon to sleep there, and meet Villiers, and others for a talk, and on Monday we shall go to Notts, next day to Derby, and on Wednesday home. The *Times* newspaper of to-day, which has just come to hand here, reports that the Government has determined to call Parliament together the first week in January, and propose total repeal![4] If this be true, the day of my emancipation is nearer than I expected. But we must be on our guard, and not expect too much from the Government. They will attempt to cheat us yet. Our meetings are everywhere gloriously attended. There is a perfect unanimity among all classes; not a syllable about Chartism or any other *ism*, and not a word of dissent. Bright and I are almost off our legs, five days this week in crowded meetings."

"*Bristol, Dec.* 5, 1845.—I slept last night at James Rhoades's, and had many kind inquiries and invitations. We had a very delightful meeting at Bath in a splendid Town Hall, the Mayor in the chair. We are having meetings every night, and I see no other prospect now but to run the gauntlet every night till the meeting of Parliament. But I

[4] The publication of the Cabinet secret made a wonderful stir at the time. The *Standard* and the *Herald* denounced it as an atrocious fabrication. But the *Times* stuck to its text, and laughed at the two "melancholy prints" who had been "hobbling about the Corn Laws to the very last," unconscious that the repeal of the Corn Laws was "a thing for statesmen to do, not for old women to maunder about."

hope we are getting to the death-struggle. Have you seen *Punch* with me on horseback and Lord John offering to hold the horse, and also as the shadow when Peel is opening the gate of monopoly." 1845. ÆT. 41.

"*London, Dec.* 15, 1845.—We have had a good meeting in the City to-day. The knowing people say that they have never seen so large and unanimous a gathering. There is no doubt that the City will return *four* Free-traders at the next election. By the way I don't hear anything decided about the decision of the Government question. People begin to doubt whether Lord John will form an Administration after all. Some knowing folks say Peel will be sent for again."

"*London, Dec.* 13. (*To George Combe.*)—Politics are like a magic-lantern just now, every day brings some new and unlooked-for change. What a righteous retribution has fallen upon the late Ministry! The men who passed the present Corn Law in the face of starving millions in the spring of 1842 have been driven from power and place by their own sliding scale! May their successors profit by the example! There is still a great struggle before us, but we will beat the unrighteous few who wish to profit by the sufferings of the many."

Two days after Cobden had been talking to the people of Birmingham in a triumphant strain about the League standing erect amid the ruins of the factions, he had an opportunity of measuring the estimate in which he was held by one at least of the factions. Sir Robert Peel resigned on the 5th of December. The Queen sent for Lord John Russell, and commissioned him to form an Administration. Lord John wrote two letters to Cobden on the same day. In the first, he gave the leader of the body which had shaken down a great Ministry and compelled an important revolution in policy, a provisional

1845. Æt. 41. invitation to take one of the humblest posts in the ministerial hierarchy :—

"Chesham Place, *Dec.* 19, 1845.

"DEAR SIR,—I do not expect that I shall be able to form an Administration. If I should, however, on this occasion or a future one, I shall ask you to assist me by accepting the office of Vice-President of the Board of Trade, Lord Clarendon being the President, and the Vice-President having to represent the department in the House of Commons.

I remain, yours faithfully,

J. RUSSELL."

The reader will smile at this proposal, when he thinks of the composition of Liberal Governments since the death of Lord Palmerston. The difference between then and now marks the decay of Whig predominance within the five-and-thirty years that have intervened. Cobden's reply to the unflattering offer might have been foreseen. There is little doubt that it would have been the same, even if the offer had been of a more serious kind.

"Manchester, *Dec.* 20, 1845.

"DEAR LORD JOHN,—I feel greatly honoured by the offer of the office of Vice-President of the Board of Trade, in the event of your being able to form an Administration. In preferring to remain at my post as the out-of-doors advocate of Free Trade, I am acting from the conviction that I can render you more efficient assistance in carrying out our principle by retaining my present position, than by entering your Government in an official capacity. Again assuring you how highly I esteem this expression of your confidence,

I remain, dear Lord John,

Most faithfully yours,

RICHARD COBDEN."

This reply crossed the second note which Lord John Russell had written to him on the previous day:— 1845. ÆT. 41.

"*Dec.* 19, 1845.

"DEAR SIR,—In consequence of what I wrote this morning, I now write to inform you that I have not been able to form a Ministry.

"All those who were to be my colleagues had agreed to the total repeal of the Corn Laws. Other differences on another subject have caused our failure.

I remain, yours faithfully,

J. RUSSELL."

The differences which were the cause of failure were with Lord Grey.[5] He objected to Lord Palmerston as Foreign Secretary. The intrigue, says one who was very competent to judge such matters, was neither contrived with dexterity nor conducted with temper, but it extricated the Whig leader from an embarrassing position.[6] Lord John Russell's plea was not only that in face of the risks to be encountered unity was indispensable, but that as Lord Grey was among the first of his party who declared for complete Free Trade in corn, it would be unjustifiable to attempt to carry it without him. Viewed from this distance of time, and in the light of the present decline of the Whig caste, the plea, it must be confessed, is one of singular tenuity. No one doubts the sincerity either of Lord John's attempt to form a government, or of his honest acquiescence in its failure. It was obviously much easier for Sir Robert Peel to settle the Corn question, because he would have the votes of the Whigs and

[5] The Lord Howick of the previous Chapter. He had become a peer on the death of his father in July, 1845. The seat which he then vacated at Sunderland was won by Mr. Hudson, the Railway King, against Colonel Perronet Thompson. Cobden spoke with sufficient pungency of the victorious candidate soon afterwards. See *Speeches*, i. 312-3.

[6] Mr. Disraeli's *Lord George Bentinck*, p. 28.

1846. the Free-traders, as well as that of a large body, if not the
ÆT. 41. majority, of his usual supporters. It was not certain that Lord John could have settled it, for the simple reason that many of the Conservatives, especially in the House of Lords, would have declined to follow him in a policy which they hardly persuaded themselves to accept from Wellington and Peel.

On the failure of his rival, Sir Robert Peel went to Windsor, withdrew his resignation, and returned to London, having already resumed the functions of the First Minister of the Crown. He hoped by speaking to his colleagues from the point of a definitely accepted position, to secure the support of those who had dissented from him at the beginning of the month. One at least of the survivors, who was in a position to know Peel's mind at this moment, holds it for certain that the Minister returned to town in the afternoon of the 20th, in full confidence that he would carry his party with him in the tremendous step which he had resolved to take. Lord Stanley withdrew at once,[7] but Peel persisted in thinking that the schism would end there. It was not many weeks before he found out his mistake. Thirty years after these events, when Peel's bitterest assailant had by a singular destiny raised himself to the height of power from which Peel was now looking down upon him, he made an interesting remark on a criticism that had been published upon his career. "The writer," said Lord Beaconsfield, "fails to do justice to a striking distinction in my political history. The Duke of Wellington in passing Catholic Eman-

[7] Lord Stanley's place at the Colonial Office was taken by Mr. Gladstone, who had left the Ministry under circumstances already described (p. 326). He had no seat in Parliament during the important session of 1846, having resigned Newark, for which he had been returned by the Duke of Newcastle. The Duke was one of the stoutest opponents of Free Trade, successfully using all his influence to secure the defeat in North Notts of his own son, whom Peel now promoted to the office of Irish Secretary and a seat in the Cabinet.

cipation, and Sir Robert Peel in repealing the Corn Laws, conceded necessary measures of progress, but *they broke up the party*. I passed Household Suffrage, but I kept the party together and brought it into power." It has often been contended by contemporaries with good information as to the state of things, that Peel would have been as successful as Mr. Disraeli afterwards was, in getting his party through an awkward gap, if he had only consented to call them together and had candidly laid before them the political considerations on which his new policy was founded. Those who hold this opinion are possibly right. It is, however, easy to perceive that Peel's situation was distinguished by two fatal peculiarities. One was that he had gone through the same process before: he had already done by Protestantism as he was now doing by Protection; he had suddenly carried out a policy of which he had been the declared and conspicuous opponent. It was the champion of Protestantism and the Church, who had repealed the Test and Corporation Acts, who had carried Catholic Emancipation, who had increased the Maynooth Grant, and who was believed to be meditating the endowment of the Irish priests. Feats of this kind do not bear repetition. In the second place, it was comparatively easy to persuade the Conservatives to assent to a lower franchise, because few of them in their hearts believed that any manipulation of the suffrage would take away from them anything which they really valued. Very many of them, on the other hand, did believe firmly that the repeal of the Corn Laws would take away from them their rents, which they valued extremely. Political plausibilities will reconcile men to everything, save the deprivation of their property. It seems doubtful then whether Sir Robert Peel could under any circumstances have prevailed upon his party to follow him. It is not to their dishonour that it should have been so The Minister was honestly convinced,

1845. Æt. 41. but the party was not. Even Cobden, when looking at the battle from a distance, thought that it would be wrong "that the House which was elected to maintain Protection should abandon its pledges and do the very reverse." Long afterwards, when Peel's Memoirs were given to the world, Cobden still held that there would be "much that is difficult to reconcile in his conduct in this question, after everything is said and confessed that he can urge in his defence."[8] The simplest explanation is the true one. It is a mistake to assume that because Peel was a great parliamentary commander, he had been mastered by the parliamentary vice of measuring national welfare by the conveniences of his party or the maintenance of a majority in a division. A colleague of Sir Robert Peel in this Administration, who has had unrivalled opportunities of seeing great public personages, speaks of him as the most "laboriously conscientious" man that he has ever known.[9] It was his conscience that had become involved in the change of commercial policy. He could, as he believed, and as he afterwards told Cobden himself, have parried the power of the League for three or four years. But he had come to the conviction that the maintenance of restriction was both unsound and dangerous, was not only impolitic but unjust. It was impossible for him to conceal his conviction, or to act as if it did not exist. Confidence in public men, he said, is shaken when they change their opinions, but confidence ought to be much more shaken when public men have not the courage to change their course when convinced of their error. But why did he not consult political decorum by allowing Lord John Russell to carry repeal, or at least by taking the opinion of the country?[1] Because Lord John could not have carried

[8] *Letter to J. Parkes*, May 26, 1856.

[9] "Allowing for differences in grasp and experience," he went on, "the Prince Consort was in this respect of the same type."

[1] Mr. Disraeli dwelt much on a certain inconsistency on this point.

repeal; and Peel could neither see any advantage in indecision or irrational delay, nor could he admit the incompetency of the present Parliament to deal with that, as with every other object of public concern.[2]

1845. Æt. 41.

"I have reason to believe," said Cobden afterwards, "that some discussions which I raised in the House with a view to proving that the agriculturists themselves were, as a whole, injured by Protection, gave him some confidence in the practicability of a change of policy." This may well have been so. The speech in which Peel announced and vindicated the new policy, is little more than an echo of Cobden's Parliamentary speeches of 1844 and 1845, and this accounts for the extraordinary prominence which he afterwards gave in so remarkable a manner to Cobden's share in what was done. Peel has explained the course along which his mind was travelling. His confidence in the necessity of Protection was lessened by the experiment of 1842. He felt from the first the increasing difficulty of applying to articles of food the principles which had been applied to so many other articles. Later experiments pointed in the same way. Certain important articles of agricultural produce were now admitted at low rates. Among these were oxen, sheep, cows, salted and fresh meat. A chorus of sinister prophecy rose from the injured interests. There was even a panic. Forced sales of stock took place. It would be impossible to compete with the foreign grazier. Meat

Peel always said that he felt that he was not the person who ought to propose repeal; and he repudiated as a foul calumny the assertion that he wished to interfere in the settlement of the question by Lord John Russell. But, asked Mr. Disraeli, what was it but your wish to interfere in this manner which broke up your Cabinet at the beginning of December? As Peel expressly said that it was only the refusal of his colleagues to assent to repeal which prevented him from remaining in office on the platform of the Edinburgh Letter, Mr. Disraeli's charge, so far as it goes, cannot be satisfactorily met.

[2] Tamworth Letter, 1847. For other reasons see Peel's letter to Cobden, below, p. 397.

1845. would be reduced to threepence a pound. The falsification
ÆT. 41. of these prophecies, as Peel reminded his constituents after his fall, was destined to have a great effect on the course of public opinion. People began to be less apprehensive of the probable consequences of a more liberal intercourse in other articles of agricultural produce.[3]

Then he perceived an increase of consumption of articles of first necessity, much more rapid than the increase in population, and this greatly augmented the responsibility of undertaking to regulate the supply of food by legislative restraints. It greatly aggravated, moreover, the peril of these restraints in the case of any sudden check to prosperity.[4]

Besides these considerations, Peel says that his faith in restrictions on the importation of corn had been weakened by general reasoning; by many concurring proofs that the wages of labour do not vary with the price of corn; by serious doubts whether, in the present condition of the country, the present plenty were not ensured for the future in a higher degree by free intercourse in corn, than by restrictions for the purpose of protecting domestic agriculture. Clear as all this is to a generation whose vision is not obscured by the passions of contemporaries, resentment and suspicion at the time were emotions that might have been expected. It speedily became certain that they were violent enough to endanger the new policy, to wreck the party, and to overthrow for ever the great Minister who had been its chief.

Meanwhile the League made ready to give him effective support. Whatever may have been the case with Sir Robert Peel himself, it is certain that other people were afraid of the operations of the League. It was this con-

[3] *Memoirs*, ii. 103.
[4] Tamworth Letter of 1847, in *Memoirs*, ii. 105.

federation which kept both the Whig advocates of a fixed duty and the Protectionist advocates of the existing law in order. In the last week in the year a meeting was held at Manchester, at which it was resolved to raise the enormous sum of a quarter of a million of money for the purposes of agitation. The scene has often been described, how one man after another called out in quick succession, "A thousand pounds for me!" "A thousand pounds for us!" and so forth, until, in less than a couple of hours, sixty thousand pounds had been subscribed on the spot. There were twenty-three persons or firms who put down one thousand pounds each, and twenty-five persons half as much. Cobden, who was always received at every public gathering during this stirring crisis with an indescribable vehemence of sympathy and applause, addressed a few words to the excited and resolute men before him. "This meeting," he said, "will afford to any Administration the best possible support in carrying out its principles. If Sir Robert Peel will go on in an intelligible and straightforward course, he will see that there is strength enough in the country to support him; and I should not be speaking the sentiments of the meeting, if I did not say that if he takes the straightforward, honest course, he will have the support of the League and the country as fully and as cordially as any other Prime Minister."[5]

At this time circumstances naturally began to work a complete change in Cobden's attitude towards Sir Robert Peel. Three weeks before, when the Minister left office, Cobden had allowed the excitement of the hour to betray him into public expressions of exultation, which were almost ferocious in their severity. Miss Martineau has explained how this fierce outburst shocked some of his friends. They appear, as has already been mentioned in another connexion (p. 207),

[5] See Prentice's *History of the League*, ii. 415.

1845. to have used the friends' privilege of dealing very faithfully
ÆT. 41. with him. Cobden had speedily become conscious of his error. One of those who remonstrated with him was his old friend, George Combe, to whom he replied as follows :—

"It was wrong to exult in Peel's fall, and yet the scene of my indiscretion was calculated to throw me off my guard, and give my feelings for a moment the mastery of my judgment. I was speaking in the face of nearly the entire adult male population of Stockport, whose terrible sufferings in 1841, when Peel took the government from the Whigs to maintain the very system which was starving them, were fresh in my memory. The news of the retirement of the Peel Ministry reached Stockport a couple of hours before the meeting took place. When it was announced, the whole audience sprang up, and gave three times three cheers. I was quite taken aback, and out came that virulent attack upon Peel, for which I have been gently rapped on the knuckles by Miss Martineau, yourself, and many other esteemed correspondents. It was an unpremeditated ebullition. Tell your good brother I will keep a more watchful guard over the old serpent that is within me for the future. You must not judge me by what I say at these tumultuous public meetings."[6]

The rest of this letter, describing his feelings about public life, has been given in a preceding chapter (pp. 207-8). In a second letter, replying we may suppose to a request of Combe's that he might be allowed to show the first to some of their common friends, Cobden referred fiercely enough, as he had previously done in public, to the extremely painful incident of 1843: it has been already described in its place.[7]

[6] *To G. Combe.* Manchester, Dec. 29, 1845. See Miss Martineau's *Autobiography*, ii. 259—262.

[7] Above, chap. xii., pp. 256—261.

"You are at liberty to make any use you please of that letter of mine, and I really feel gratified and proud that you take so much interest in preserving for me the good opinion of those whose esteem is worth having. Now let me add, that although, as between you and myself, I am eager to avow my regret at having been betrayed into a vindictive attack upon Peel, although I admit that Christian principle was violated in that speech, and that I should have better consulted what was due to myself if I had shown greater magnanimity on the occasion, still as between any other looker-on and myself, I must say that Peel's atrocious conduct towards me ought not to be lost sight of. I do not complain of his insinuating that I wished to incite to his assassination, and hounding on his party to destroy me in the eyes of the world. His conduct might have been excused on account of his state of mind, from the recent death of Drummond, and the distress and anxiety of his wife and daughter, who, I believe, unnerved him by their alarm for his safety. But although this excused him at the instant, it did not atone for his having failed to retract or explain his foul charge subsequently, which, in fact, made and now makes it a deliberate attempt at moral assassination, which I cannot and ought not to forget, and therefore I should feel justified in repeating what I said at Covent Garden, that I should forfeit my own respect and that of my friends if I ever exchanged a word with that man in private."[*]

No nature was ever less disposed for the harbouring of long resentments, and it was not many weeks from this time before a curious incident had the effect of finally effacing the last trace of enmity between these two honoured men. A vulgar attack happened to be made in the course of debate on the Chairman of the League, which drew a rebuke

[*] *To Geo. Combe.* Manchester, Feb. 1846.

from a member who was himself renowned for bitterness of speech and the unbridled licence of his imputations. Mr. Disraeli defended the original assailant by appealing to the example of the Prime Minister, who had, if he did not mistake, accused a member of the League of abetting assassination. Sir Robert Peel immediately rose to explain that his intention at the time was to relieve Mr. Cobden in the most distinct manner from the imputation which by misapprehension he had put upon him. If any one present had stated to him that his reparation was not so complete, and his avowal of error not so unequivocal, as it ought to have been, he should at once have repeated it more plainly and distinctly. Cobden followed, saying that he had felt, and the country had felt, that the Minister's disavowal had not been so distinct as was to have been expected. He was glad that it had now been explicitly made, because it gave him an opportunity of expressing his own regret at the terms in which he had more than once referred to Sir Robert Peel. And so with the expression of a hope that the subject might never be revived, the incident came to an end.

CHAPTER XVI.

REPEAL OF THE CORN LAWS AND FALL OF THE GOVERNMENT.

The public excitement and private anxieties of the year which had just come to an end, had seriously shaken Cobden's health. Before Parliament opened he was laid up with a complicated affection of head, ears, and throat, the result of laborious speaking to great audiences in the open air or in vast halls. He remained liable for the rest of his life to deafness and hoarseness. All through the Session of 1846 he was out of health. Fortunately, circumstances had now taken a turn which no longer demanded much more from him than silent vigilance.

A few days after the Session opened, the Prime Minister announced his proposals. The repeal of the Corn Laws was to be total. But it was not to be immediate. The ports were not to be entirely open for three years. During this interval there was to be a sliding scale, with a maximum duty of ten shillings when the price of wheat should be under forty-eight shillings, and a minimum duty of four shillings when the price reached fifty-four shillings a quarter. The views of the League therefore would not be fully realized until February, 1849.

The opponents of the Minister began to talk of an appeal to the country, and Cobden addressed himself to this critical point in the one speech of any importance which he felt called upon to make through the whole of these protracted debates. He plied the Protectionists with defiant tests of the

1846. national opinion. The petitions for repeal had ten times as
ÆT. 42. many signatures as petitions for Protection. But, they cried, the most numerously signed were fictitious. Then let them try public meetings. He challenged them to hold a single public and open meeting anywhere in the land. Then for parliamentary representation. "I ought to know," he said, "as much about the state of the representation and of the registration as any man in this House. Probably no one has given so much attention to that question as I have done, and I distinctly deny that you have the slightest probability of gaining a numerical majority, if a dissolution took place to-morrow. Now I would not have said this three months ago; but your party is broken up." Four-fifths of the Conservatives from the towns in the north of England were followers of Sir Robert Peel, and not of the Protectionist Dukes. They had been for Free Trade all along, but they had confidence in the Minister, that he would do what was necessary at the proper time. But let them suppose that the Protectionists might have a numerical majority. What would be the character of the minority? It would contain the whole twenty members for the metropolis and the metropolitan county. Edinburgh and Dublin would follow London. There was not in all Great Britain a town of five-and-twenty thousand inhabitants, not even Liverpool or Bristol, which would not send members pledged to Free Trade. What would a majority of twenty or thirty men in pocket-boroughs and nomination counties do in face of such a minority as this? They would shrink aghast from the position in which they found themselves. The members who came up under such circumstances to maintain the Corn Laws from their Ripons and Stamfords, Woodstocks and Marlboroughs, would not defend their views a day after they had found out so vast a moral preponderance of public opinion as this.[1]

[1] *Speeches*, i. No. xxi. Feb. 27, 1846.

The characteristic of all Cobden's best speeches was a just distribution of facts as the groundwork of his reasoning, and this for its particular purpose was one of his best speeches. No attempt was made at the time, nor has been made since, to weaken his striking statement of the condition of the public mind. Even the Prime Minister was not prepared for such an overwhelming force of opinion. Towards the close of the session, when all was over, Peel met Mr. Bright in the division lobby and had some talk with him. He had no conception, he said, of the intense feeling of hatred with which the Corn Law had been regarded, more especially in Scotland.

The first reading was carried by a majority of 337 to 240. But an acute observer gave Cobden what was perhaps the superfluous warning, not to allow the victory to throw him off his guard. The difficulties were still to come, and they were very serious. In spite of the extraordinary position in which they had been left by the desertion of Peel and all the rest of their leaders in both Houses of Parliament, excepting only Lord Stanley, the Protectionists were undeniably strong. The bold and patient politician, of whom they then thought so lightly, but who was in fact the sustaining genius of their group, has described the steps by which they found new leaders and a coherent organization. Lord George Bentinck was not a great man, but then the most dexterous and far-seeing of parliamentary manœuvrers had his ear and was constantly by his side. Mr. Disraeli must be said to have sinned against light. His compliments to Peel and Free Trade in 1842 prove it. Lord George Bentinck formed some views on the merits of Protection by-and-by, but the first impulse which moved him was resentment at betrayal. It is easy to say that the key to his action was incensed party spleen, but the emotion was not wholly discreditable. One day he walked away from the House in

1846. company with a conspicuous member of the League. With
ÆT. 42. that amicable freedom of remark which parliamentary habits permit and nourish even between the stoutest adversaries, the Leaguer expressed his wonder that Lord George Bentinck should fear any evil from the removal of the duty. "Well," Lord George answered, "I keep horses in three counties, and they tell me that I shall save fifteen hundred a year by free trade. I don't care for that. *What I cannot bear is being sold.*" This was not the language of magnanimity or of statesmanship, but it aptly expressed the dogged anger of "the Manners, the Somersets, the Lowthers, and the Lennoxes, the Mileses and the Henleys, the Duncombes and the Liddells and the Yorkes," and all the rest of that host of men of metal and large-acred squires whom the strange rhapsodist of the band has enumerated in a list as sonorous as Homer's catalogue of the ships.[1] These honest worthies did not know much about the Circle of the Exchanges, but they believed that Free Trade would destroy rent, and that the League was bent on overthrowing the Church and the Throne; while they saw for themselves that their leader had become an apostate. But this country, as Cobden said at the time, is governed by the ignorance of the country. Their want of intelligence did not prevent them from possessing a dangerous power for the moment.

The majority on the first reading was a hollow and not an honest majority, and the Protectionists were quite aware of it. The remarkable peculiarity of the parliamentary contest was that not a hundred members of the House of Commons were in favour of total repeal, and fewer still were in favour of immediate repeal. Lord Palmerston, as Cobden wrote to a friend long after these events, showed unmistakable signs that he was not unwilling to head or join a party to

[1] *Lord George Bentinck*, p. 216, ch. xv.

keep a fixed duty, but he was too shrewd to make such an attempt when success was impossible.[1] In the Upper House it was notorious that not one peer in ten was in his heart inclined to pass the Corn Bill. If the Lords were to be coerced into giving their assent, it was indispensable that the entire Whig party in the Commons should keep together and vote in every division. It was undoubtedly the interest of the Whigs to help Peel to get the Corn Law out of the way, and then to turn him out. But there was a natural temptation to trip him up before the time.

The curious balance of factions filled the air with the spirit of intrigue, and until the very last there was good reason to apprehend that the Peers might force Peel to accept the compromise of a fixed duty, or else to extend the term for the expiration of the existing duty. No episode in our history shows in a more distressing light the trickery and chicane which some thinkers believe to be inseparable from parliamentary institutions. In this case, however, as in so many others, the mischief had its root not in parliamentary institutions, but in that constitutional paradox, as perplexing in theory as it is equivocal in practice, which gives a hereditary chamber the prerogative of revising and checking the work of the representative chamber.

The session had not advanced very far, before other dangers loomed on the horizon. The Ministry was doomed in any case. Whether Peel succeeded or failed with the Corn Bill, nobody at this time thought it possible that he could carry on a Conservative Government in a new Parliament, and he could hardly become the chief of a Liberal Government. The question was whether and how he should repeal the Corn Law. Difficulties arose from a quarter where they were not expected. The misery of the winter in Ireland had produced its natural fruits in disorder and

[1] *To J. Parkes.* June 10, 1857.

1846. violence. The Ministry resorted for the eighteenth time
ÆT. 42. since the Union to the stale device of a Coercion Bill, that stereotyped avowal,—and always made, strange to say, without shame or contrition,—of the secular neglect and incompetency of the English Government of Ireland. Two perilous inconveniences followed. The first was that the Irish members, led by O'Connell, persistently opposed by all the means in their power every step of this violent and shallow policy. It would have been ignoble if they had done less. But their just and laudable obstruction of the Coercion Bill interposed dangerous delays in the way of the Corn Bill. This, however, was not the only peril. The Coercion Bill laid the train for a combination which could hardly have been foreseen, but which was eventually irresistible. Cobden and his friends were hostile to the measure on the policy and the merits, nor in any case could their votes have saved the Ministry. Lord John Russell and the Whigs had no objection to a Coercion Bill, of which for that matter they have been the steadiest patrons, but they could not resist the temptation to pay off old scores when the Minister declared Coercion to be urgent, and then actually let it slumber for five months.[4] Lord George Bentinck discerned very early the elements of an invincible dilemma and a promising plot. If the Minister pushed the Coercion Bill, that would keep back the Corn Bill. If he gave the priority to the Corn Bill, this would prove that the Coercion Bill was not urgent, and therefore ought not to be supported.

[4] We have an excellent illustration of the practice of making Ireland the shuttlecock of English parties, in the fact that the Whigs who had turned out Peel on the principle of Non-Coercion, had not been in office a month before they introduced an Irish Arms Bill. The opposition, however, was so sharp that the Bill was withdrawn in a fortnight. This Whig levity was a match for the Tory levity which had declared Coercion urgent in January, and taken no steps to secure it until June.

Thus by an extraordinary and unparalleled state of political parties, a measure for which the country was sincerely anxious, which was confessedly required by the circumstances of the moment, and which the leader of the Opposition was as desirous of passing as the Prime Minister, seemed to be in constant risk of miscarrying at every moment, and was attended by every circumstance of embarrassment alike to supporters and opponents. The great disadvantage that Cobden saw in the critical state of the Government throughout the session, was the encouragement that it held out to the House of Lords to delay Repeal. This made his own course and that of the League all the clearer. It was their policy loudly and pointedly to denounce all compromise on the part either of the Minister or of equivocal friends. Cobden did not fear that the Whigs would take means to reject the Bill, for this reason, and perhaps for no loftier one, that its rejection would afford Peel an opportunity of dissolving on the question; and a dissolution, as Cobden whether rightly or wrongly believed, would snuff the Whigs out, obliterate all old party distinctions, "and give Peel a five years' lease at the head of a mixed progressive party."[1] He was equally puzzled to understand why Peel should press the Coercion Bill forward, and why the Whigs should show such eagerness to avail themselves of monopolist support to throw Peel out. He could only explain the second of the two perplexities, by supposing that "the Whigs are hugging the delusion that the country wants them back in office. For my part, I cannot meet with anybody whose face does not drop like the funds at the bare prospect of the change."

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Æt. 42.

We shall see presently what Peel himself had to say to this idea of a mixed progressive party. Meanwhile, Cobden's dislike and distrust of the Whigs was as intense as ever, and

[1] *To Mr. Sturge.* June 10, 1846.

1846. even drew upon him remonstrances from some of his own
ÆT. 42. allies. "What are the old Whig party," he asked impatiently, "going to do for us in North Notts?[6] There is a division with under 4000 voters, and a strong Liberal party. It was considered Whig until the base selfishness of the landlords of that party led them to desert their colours there and in every other county upon the bread question. My old friend, Bean, of Nottingham, reckoned the Liberal party safe upon the last register, and it is improved upon the present one. But he, honest man, has been reckoning all Whigs as Free Traders. Now, however, Peel's plunge must have brought over some of the Tories to Free Trade, and if there were any disposition on the part of the Whig proprietors to bring in a repealer, they could do it with the aid or neutrality of the Peelites. I look to the conduct of the Whigs in the counties as the test of their honesty on our question. Hitherto they have done nothing except to revile and oppose us. Not a county has been gained to Free Trade but by League money, and at a terrible cost of labour to the Leaguers. I invaded the West Riding, in November, 1844, and held public meetings in all the great towns to rouse them to qualify 2000 votes. Lord Fitzwilliam wrote me advising me not to come, as I should do more harm than good! Had I followed his advice, Lord Morpeth might still have been rusticating at Castle Howard.[7] You will perhaps tell me, that the leaders of the Whig party can't control their old friends in the counties upon the Corn question. True. But then, what

[6] Seat vacated by Lord Lincoln. See above, p. 346 *n*.

[7] Lord Wharncliffe, who held the office of President of the Council, died suddenly in the midst of the ministerial crisis. Mr. Stuart Wortley's consequent elevation to the peerage vacated the seat for the West Riding. "You know,"—so Cobden told the story three years later—"that the West Riding of Yorkshire is considered the great index of public opinion in this country. In that great division, at present containing 37,000 voters, Lord Morpeth was defeated on the question of Free Trade, and two Protectionists were returned. I went into the West Riding with this 40*s*. freehold plan. I stated in every borough and district that we must have 5000 qualifications

a bold farce is it now to attempt to parade the Whig party 1846.
as the Free Traders par excellence! I will be no party to ÆT. 42.
such a fraud as the attempt to build up its ruined popularity upon a question in which the Whig aristocracy and proprietors in the counties either take no interest, or, if so, only to resist it. I see no advantage but much danger to our cause from the present efforts to set up the old party distinctions, and calm reflection tells me that isolation is more and more the true policy of the League."[1] This idea held strong possession of him until the day of Peel's final defeat and resignation.

Before coming to that, it will be convenient to state very briefly the course of proceedings in Parliament. The motion was made to go into Committee on the Resolutions, on the 9th February. Eighteen days later, after twelve nights of debate, and after one hundred and three speeches had been delivered, the Government were successful by a majority of ninety-seven. On March 2, the House went into Committee on the Resolutions, and Mr. Villiers's amendment that Repeal should be immediate as well as total, was lost by an immense majority, barely short of two hundred. The Corn Bill was then read a second time on March 27, by a majority of eighty-eight in a House of five hundred and sixteen; and it was finally carried in the House of Commons at four o'clock in the morning of May 16, by a majority of ninety-eight in a House of five hundred and fifty-six. The Lords made a much less effective opposition than, as is shown by Cobden's letters, was commonly expected. The second reading was carried by two hundred and eleven against one hundred and sixty-four, or a majority of forty-seven. Amendments were

made. They were made. . . . Men qualified themselves with a view of helping the repeal of the Corn Laws, and in consequence of that movement Lord Morpeth walked over the course at the next election."—*Speeches*, ii. 494. Nov. 26, 1849.

[1] *To Mr. J. Parkes.* Feb. 16, 1846.

1846. moved in Committee, but none of them met with success,
ÆT. 42. and Lord Stanley, who led the Protectionists, declined to divide the House on the third reading. The Conservatives acted on the policy laid down by Peel himself seven years before, as one of the working principles of the great party which he had formed—"a party which, existing in the House of Commons, and deriving its strength from the popular will, should diminish the risk and deaden the shock of collisions between the two deliberative branches of the legislature."[1] The battle had been fought in the House of Commons, and as it had been lost there, then by Peel's salutary rule, the defeat was accepted as decisive.

This is the proper place for Cobden's own story of his interests and occupations during that agitated session. We must not forget that his private affairs had only been provisionally arranged in the previous autumn, and that they were as gloomy as his public position was triumphant. Before giving the shorter correspondence, written from day to day to his wife and his brother, it will be convenient to give three longer letters, affording a more general view of what at this time was engaging his thoughts.

March 7, 1846. (*To G. Combe.*)—"I am pretty well recovered from my local attack; a little deafness is all that remains. But the way in which I was prostrated by an insignificant cold in my head has convinced me (even if my doctor had not told it) how much my constitution has been impaired by the excitement and wear and tear of the last few years. The mainspring has been overweighted, and I must resolve upon some change to wind up the machinery, before I shall be able to enter upon any renewed labours. My medical friend boldly tells me that I ought to disappear from political life for a year or two, and seek a different kind of excitement in other scenes abroad.

[1] Peel's Speech at Merchant Taylors' Hall in 1839.

He talks to me of the hot baths of the Pyrenees as desirable for such cases; of a low pulse, feeble circulation, and a disordered skin, and he speaks of a winter to be passed in a southern latitude. Heaven knows what I shall do! But one thing is certain, I neither feel in health nor spirits to take that prominent place in the political world which the public voice seems to be ready to demand. The truth is, I have gradually and unexpectedly been forced upwards, by the accident of my position in connexion with a great principle (which would have elevated anybody else who had only tenacity of will enough to cling to it), and I feel, in the present state of my health, and from other private and domestic considerations, letting alone my mental incapacity, unable to pursue the elevated career which many partial friends and supporters would expect from me. But I am resolved to give primary consideration to my health, and to the welfare of those whom nature has given the first claim to my attentions. This, I think, no one will deny me. For I assure you that during the last five years so much have I been involved in the vortex of public agitation, that I have almost forgotten my own identity and completely lost sight of the comforts and interests of my wife and children.

"Besides, to confess the truth, I am less and less in love with what is generally called political life, and am not sure that I could play a successful part as a general politician. Party trammels, unless in favour of some well-defined and useful principle, would be irksome to me, and I should be restive and intractable to those who might expect me to run in their harness. However, all this may stand over till we have really accomplished the work which drew me into my present position. I am afraid our friends in the country are a little too confident. The Government measure is by no means safe with the Lords yet. They will mutilate or reject it if they think the country will suffer it. Bear in mind, if

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you please, that there are not twenty men in that assembly who in their hearts earnestly desire total repeal. Nay, I am of opinion that not one hundred men in the Commons would be more disposed for the measure, if they could obey their own secret inclinations, without the influence of outward considerations. Amongst all the converts and conformers, I class Sir Robert Peel as one of the most sincere and earnest. I have no doubt he is acting from strong conviction. His mind has a natural leaning towards politico-economical truths. The man who could make it his hobby so early to work out the dry problem of the currency question, and arrive at such sound conclusions, could not fail to be equally able and willing to put in practice the other theories of Adam Smith. It is from this that I rely upon his not compromising our principle beyond the three years. But I must confess I have not the same confidence in Lord John and the Whigs. Not that I think the latter inferior in moral sentiment, but the *reverse*. But Lord John and his party do not understand the subject so well as Peel. The Whig leader is great upon questions of a constitutional character, and has a hereditary leaning towards a popular and liberal interpretation of the Constitution. But his mind is less adapted for the mastery of economical questions, and he attaches an inferior importance to them. Nor does he weigh the forces of public opinion so accurately as Peel. He breathes the atmosphere of a privileged clique. His sympathies are aristocratic. He is sometimes thinking of the House of Russell, whilst Peel is occupied upon Manchester. They are in a false position; Peel ought to be the leader of the middle class, and I am not sure that he is not destined to be so before the end of his career."

London, March 12. (*To Mr. T. Hunter.*)—"Many thanks for your warm-hearted letter. I have often thought of you, and our good friends, Potter and Ashworth,

and of the anomalous position in which I was left when our consultations ended last autumn. Had it not been for the potato panic, which dawned upon us within a few weeks after we came to the wise decision respecting my own course of action, I should then have been bound by the necessity of circumstances to have abandoned my public career. That providential dispensation opened out a prospect of a speedy termination of our agitation, which has not been disappointed. I therefore made arrangements of a temporary kind for the management of my private concerns. This, I concluded, was understood by you and my other privy councillors. But the arrangement was only provisional; and now that I trust we are really drawing towards a virtual settlement of the Corn question, my private concerns again press upon my attention. I am in a false situation, and every day increases its difficulty. My prominent position before the world leads the public to expect that I shall take a leading part in future political affairs, for which I do not feel in health or spirits to be equal, and which private considerations render altogether impossible.

"The truth is, that accident, quite as much as any merit on my own part, has forced me gradually into a notoriety for which I have not naturally much taste; but which, under all circumstances, is a source of continued mental embarrassment to me. How to escape from the dilemma has been for months the subject of cogitation with me. My own judgment leads irresistibly to one solution of the difficulty, by retiring from Parliament as soon as the corn question is safe. I observe your allusion to a public demonstration; and the idea of a testimonial has reached me through so many channels, that it would be affectation to conceal from myself that something of the kind is in contemplation. I am not, I confess, sanguine about the success of such an effort, pecuniarily speaking, on the part of my friends. Public

1846. ÆT. 42. ebullitions of the kind never realize the expectations of their promoters, and there are reasons against such success in my own case. Out of Manchester I am regarded as a rich man, thanks to the exaggerations of the Duke of Richmond and the Protectionists.

"But, besides, there are others who have as good claims as myself upon public consideration for the labours given to the good cause. I have been often pained to see that my fame, both in England and on the Continent, has eclipsed that of my worthy fellow-labourers. But it would be an injustice which neither I nor the public voice would sanction, if I were to reap all the substantial fruits of our joint exertions, to the exclusion of others whose sacrifices and devotion have hardly been second to my own.

"As respects my own feelings on the subject of a testimonial, although I see it in a different light after the work is done to that in which I viewed it before, still, I must confess, that it is not otherwise than a distasteful theme. Were I a rich man, or even in independent circumstances, I could not endure the thoughts of it. But when I think of my age, and the wear and tear of my constitution, and reflect upon the welfare of those to whom Nature has given the first, and for them, the only claims upon my consideration, I do not feel in a position to give a chivalrous refusal to any voluntary public subsidy. Like the poor apothecary, my poverty and not my will consents. Still, consulting my own feelings, I should like to be out of Parliament before any demonstration were made. I could hardly explain why I should prefer this, it is so peculiarly a matter of feeling. It is not with a view to escape from public usefulness hereafter. I am aware that success in my Free Trade labours will invest me with some moral power, which, after my health was thoroughly wound up again for a renewed effort, I should feel anxious to bring to bear upon great questions

for the benefit of society. But I have a strong and instinctive feeling that an interregnum in my public life would rather increase than diminish my power of usefulness. Besides and independent of considerations of health, I am not anxious to be a party in any more political arrangements during the next year or two. Assuming even that the public placed me in a new position, free from anxieties of a private kind, still I should shrink from undertaking the office of a party politician. I do not think I should make a useful partisan, unless in the advancement of a defined and simple principle. Now the next year will witness a destruction of old, and a combination of new parties, to which I should be called upon to give support, and probably invited to take office. Official life would not suit me. My only path to public usefulness is in pursuing the same independent course as respects parties which I have hitherto followed. I am aware that others might take a different view; but still no one can be so fair a judge as myself of that which involves a knowledge of my own aptitude, springing from private tastes and feelings.

"I might add as a motive for leaving Parliament, a growing dislike for House of Commons life, and a distaste for mere party political action. But this applies to my present views only in as far as it affects my health and temporary purposes. It is a repugnance which might and ought to be overcome for the sake of usefulness; and there are enough good men in Parliament who sacrifice private convenience for public good, to compensate for the society of the herd who are brought there for inferior objects.

"I have now poured out my inward thoughts to you in unreserved confidence—thoughts which have not been committed to paper before. And I do it with the fullest satisfaction, for I know that, whilst you sympathize with my feelings, you will bring a cool judgment to my assistance.

I may add that it is premature yet to consider the struggle at an end. The Lords are not yet decided what to do with the Government measure. There are rumours still of an attempt to compromise. It is reported that Lord Fitzwilliam is returning from Italy to head a fixed-duty party, and there is still a strong body in the Commons anxious for such a course. In fact there are not a hundred men in the Commons, or twenty in the Lords, who at heart are anxious for total repeal. They are coerced by the out-of-doors opinion, and nothing but the dread of the League organization enables Peel to persevere. But for our forty-shilling freehold bludgeons, the aristocracy would have resisted the Government measure almost to a man. My strongest hopes centre in Peel. I have far more confidence in him than the Whig leaders. He is acting from strong convictions. He understands politico-economical questions better than Lord John, and attaches far more importance to sound principles in practical legislation. He and Sir James Graham make no secret of their determination to stand or fall by their measure. Such being their decision, the only delay that can take place is in the event of a dissolution; and I think the Lords will shrink from such a desperate and fruitless alternative when the critical moment arrives."

April 2. („)—"So far as I can control my future course of action, I am prepared to do so; and the first step which duty requires, is to place myself in a private position at the earliest moment when I can make the change, without sacrificing the public interest which is to some extent involved in my person. In fact I should have long ago retired into private life, but for this consideration. It is still a little uncertain when we shall escape from the tenter-hooks of delay. Even if the Lords pass the Government measure without attempts at mutilation, of which, by the way, I am still not so sanguine as

many people, then it will be two months yet before the royal hand can reach the Act for the total repeal of the Corn Law. Should the Peers attempt a compromise, I have reason to feel satisfied that the Government will be firm; and then we may possibly have a dissolution. A sharp struggle in the country would in all probability be followed by total and immediate repeal, carried with a high hand. But, assuming the most probable event, viz. that the Lords do pass the Bill, then my mind is made up to accept the Chiltern Hundreds the day after it receives the royal assent.

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"Now, my dear sir, the rest must be left to the chapter of fate, and I shall be prepared to meet it, come what may. This decision is entirely the result of my own cogitations. I have consulted nobody. If the rumour got abroad amongst my friends, I should be persecuted with advice or remonstrance, to which I should be expected to give answers involving explanations painful to me. And it is quite marvellous how apt the newspapers are to get raw material enough for an *on dit* if a man suffers his plans to go beyond his own bosom. I could, of course, make my health honestly the plea for leaving Parliament, and can show, if need be, the advice of the first medical men in London and Edinburgh to justify me in seeking at least a twelvemonth's relaxation from public life.

"I have thus given you an earnest of my determination to do all that I can to acquit myself of my private as well as public duties. It has always been to me a spectacle worthy of reproach to see a man sacrificing the welfare of his own domestic circle to the cravings of a morbid desire for public notoriety. And God, who knows our hearts, will free me from any such unworthy motives. I was driven along a groove by accident, too fast and too far to retreat with honour or without the risk of some loss to the country,

1846. but the happiest moment of my life will be that which
ÆT. 42. releases me from the conflicting sense of rival duties, by restoring me again to private life."

A few days later he wrote to Mr. Edmund Potter:—

"Many thanks for your friendly letter. Though I appreciate your kindness even where it restrains you from writing to me, let me assure you that your handwriting always gives me pleasure. You would not doubt it, if you could have a peep at the letters which pour in upon me. I have sometimes thought of giving William Chambers a hint for an amusing paper in his journal upon the miseries of a popular man. First, half the mad people in the country who are still at large, and they are legion, address their incoherent ravings to the most notorious man of the hour. Next, the kindred tribe who think themselves poets, who are more difficult than the mad people to deal with, send their doggerel and solicit subscriptions to their volumes, with occasional requests to be allowed to dedicate them. Then there are the Jeremy Diddlers who begin their epistles with high-flown compliments upon my services to the millions, and always wind up with a request that I will bestow a trifle upon the individual who ventures to lay his distressing case before me. To add to my miseries, people have now got an idea that I am influential with the Government, and the small place-hunters are at me. Yesterday a man wrote from Yorkshire, wanting the situation of a gauger, and to-day a person in Herts requests me to procure him a place in the post-office. Then there are all the benevolent enthusiasts who have their pet reforms, who think that because a man has sacrificed himself in mind, body, and estate in attempting to do one thing, he is the very person to do all the rest. These good people dog me with their projects. Nothing in their eyes is impossible in my hands. One worthy man calls to

assure me that I can reform the Church, and unite the Wesleyans with the Establishment. 1846. ÆT. 42.

"That zealous and excellent educationalist, Stone, of Glasgow, seized upon me yesterday. 'I have often thought,' said he, 'that Lord Ashley or Mr. Colquhoun was the man to carry a system of National Education through Parliament. But they have not moral courage; if you will take it in hand, in less than four years you will get a vote of twenty millions, and reconcile all the religious parties to one uniform system of religious education.' I replied that I had tried my hand on a small scale in the attempt to unite the sects in Lancashire in 1836, but that I took to the repeal of the Corn Laws as light amusement compared with the difficult task of inducing the priests of all denominations to agree to suffer the people to be educated. The next time I meet Dickens or Jerrold, I shall assuredly give them a hint for a new hero of the stage or the novel, 'The Popular Man.'

"In answer to your kind inquiries after my health, I am happy to say I am pretty free from any physical ailment. It is only in my nervous system that I am out of sorts. The last two or three months have kept me on the rack, and worried me more than the last seven years of agitation. But if I could get out of the treadmill, and with a mind at ease take a twelvemonth's relaxation and total change of scene and climate as far off as Thebes or Persepolis, where there are no post-offices, newspapers, or politicians, I see no reason why I should not live to seventy; for I have faith in my tough and wiry body and a temperament naturally cool and controllable, excepting when my mind is harassed as it has been by circumstances connected with my private concerns, which I could not grapple with and master, solely because I was chained to another

1846. ÆT. 42. The extracts that now follow are from letters to Mrs. Cobden, except in the few cases where a footnote gives the name of some other correspondent:—

"*London, Jan.* 23.—Peel's speech last night[1] would have done capitally for Covent Garden Theatre, and Lord Francis Egerton's would have been a capital address from the chair if he had filled George Wilson's place. The Tories are in a state of frantic excitement, and the Carlton Club is all in confusion. Nobody knows his party. I have no doubt Peel will do our work thoroughly, or fall in the attempt. He will be able to carry his measure easily through the Commons, with the aid of the Opposition, but I have my suspicions that the Lords will throw it out and force a dissolution. Whatever happens, I can see a prospect of my emancipation at no distant date. I am going to-morrow to Windsor, to spend the Sunday with Mr. Grote."

"*Jan.* 26.—I spent yesterday at Grote's, about four miles from Slough, and met Senior the political economist, Parkes, and Lumley the lessee of the Italian Opera. We had a long walk of nearly twelve miles round the country, and for want of training I find myself like an old posting-horse to-day, stiff and footsore. . . . There are reports to-day of some resignations about the Court, but I don't hear of anybody of consequence who is abandoning Peel. Still there is no knowing what to-morrow may bring forth. We hear nothing as to the details of Peel's plan to-morrow, for which we are all looking with great anxiety. But the report is still that he intends to go the whole hog. A very handsome gold snuff-box has just been presented to me by Mr. Collett, the member for Athlone."

"*Jan.* 28.—Peel is at last delivered, but I hardly know whether to call it a boy or a girl. Something between the two, I believe. His corn measure makes an end of all

[1] Announcing the necessity of a new commercial system.

corn laws in 1849, and in the meantime it is virtually a fixed 1846.
duty of 4*s*. He has done more than was expected from him, ÆT. 42.
and all *but* the right thing. Whether it will satisfy our ardent friends in the north is the question. Let me know all the gossip you hear about it. I abstained from saying a word in the House because I did not wish to commit myself, and I dissuaded Villiers and the rest of the Leaguers from speaking. It was too good a measure to be denounced, and not quite good enough for unqualified approbation, and therefore I thought it best to be quiet. To-day I have attended a meeting at Lord John's of the leaders of the Whig party. They seemed disposed to co-operate with Peel. But Villiers will bring on his motion for total and immediate repeal, and when that is lost we must do the best we can. The measure will pass the Commons with a very large majority, some people say seventy to one hundred, but the question still is what will be done in the Lords? I asked Lord John to-day what he thought the Peers would do with the Bill, and he says if Lord Stanley heads the Protectionists they will reject it, but that the Lords will not put themselves under the Dukes of Richmond and Buckingham. I hear that Lord Stanley is not for fighting the battle of Monopoly. So much for the great question."

"*Jan.* 29.[1]—My own opinion is that we should not be justified in the eyes of the country if we did anything in the House to obstruct the measure, and I doubt whether any such step out of doors would be successful. In the House, Villiers will bring on his motion for total and immediate repeal, and I shall not be surprised if it were successful simply on agricultural grounds by our being able to demonstrate unanswerably that it is better for farmers and landowners to have the change at once rather than gradually. But we should have no chance on any other than agricultural grounds. To make

[1] *To Geo. Wilson.*

1846. Ӕт. 42. the appeal from the manufacturing districts simply on the plea of *justice to the consumers*, would not have much sympathy here or elsewhere, and would have no effect upon Parliament while the question is merely one of less than three years time. Therefore, while I would advise you to petition for the whole measure, I can't say I think any great demonstration as against Peel's compromise would have much sympathy elsewhere. Understand, I would not shift a hair's-breadth from our ground, but what I mean strongly to impress on you is my belief that any attempt at a powerful agitation against Peel's compromise would be a failure. And I should not like the League Council to take a step which did not at once receive a national support. For myself in the House I will undertake to prove unanswerably that it would be just to all, and especially politic for the agriculturists, to make the repeal immediate, but if we fail on Villiers's motion to carry the immediate, I shall give my unhesitating support to Peel, and I will not join Whigs or protectionists in any factious plan for tripping up his heels. I can't hold any different language from this out of doors, and therefore can hardly see the use of a public meeting till the measure comes on in Parliament."

"*Feb.* 9.[1]—The Queen's doctor, Sir James Clark (a good Leaguer at heart), has written to offer to pay me a friendly visit, and talk over the state of my constitution, with a view to advise me how to unstring the bow. He wrote me a croaking warning letter more than a year ago. As it is possible there may be a paragraph in some newspaper alluding to my health, I thought it best to let you know in case of inquiry. But don't write me a long dismal letter in return, for I can't read them, and it does no good. If Charles could come up for a week with a determination to work and think, he might help me with my letters, but he will make

[1] *To F. W. Cobden.*

my head worse if he requires me to look after him, and so you must say plainly."

"*London, Feb.* 19.[4]—Your letter has followed me here. Peel's declaration in the House that he will adopt immediate repeal if it is voted by the Commons, seems to me to remove all difficulty from Villiers's path; he can now propose his old motion without the risk of doing any harm even if he should not succeed. As respects the future course of the League, the less that is said now about it publicly the better. If Peel's measure should become law, then the Council will be compelled to face the question, 'What shall the League do during the three years?' It has struck me that under such circumstances we might absolve the large subscribers from all further calls, put the staff of the League on a peace footing, and merely keep alive a nominal organization to prevent any attempt to undo the good work we have effected. Not that I fear any reaction. On the contrary, I believe the popularity of Free Trade principles is only in its infancy, and that it will every year take firmer hold of the head and heart of the community. But there is perhaps something due to our repeated pledges that we will not dissolve until the corn laws are entirely abolished. In any case the work will be effectually finished during this year, provided the League preserve its firm and united position; and it is to prevent the slightest appearance of disunion that I would avoid now talking in public about the future course of the League. It is the League, and it only, that frightens the peers. It is the League alone which enables Peel to repeal the law. But for the League the aristocracy would have hunted Peel to a premature grave, or consigned him like Lord Melbourne to a private station at the bare mention of total repeal. We must hold the same rod over the Lords until the measure is safe; after that I agree with

[4] *To H. Ashworth.*

1846. you in thinking that it matters little whether the League
ÆT. 42. dies with honours, or lingers out a few years of inglorious existence."

"*March* 6.[5]—Nobody knows to this day what the Lords will do, and I believe all depends upon their fears of the country. If there was not something behind corn which they dread even still more, I doubt if they would ever give up the key of the bread basket. They would turn out Peel with as little ceremony as they would dismiss a groom or keeper, if he had not the League at his back. It is strange to see the obtuseness of such men as Hume, who voted against Villiers's motion to *help Peel*. I have reason to know that the latter was well pleased at the motion, and would have been glad if we had had a larger division. It helps Peel to be able to point to something beyond, which he does not satisfy. I wish we were out of it."

"*March* 25.[6]—I have received the notes. Moffatt mentioned to me the report in the city to which you refer. There is no help for these things, and the only wonder is that we have escaped so well. If you can keep this affair in any way afloat till the present corn measure reaches the Queen's hands, I will solve the difficulty, by cutting the Gordian knot, or rather the House; and the rest must take its chance. I don't think I shall speak in this debate. It does no earthly good, and only wastes time. People are not likely to say I am silent because I can't answer Bentinck and Co. The bill would be out of the Commons, according to appearances, before Easter."

"*March* 30.—We are uncertain which course will be taken by the Government to-night, whether the Corn or Coercion Bill is to be proceeded with. If the latter, I fear

[5] *To F. W. Cobden.*

[6] *To F. W. Cobden.*

we shall not make another step with the corn question before Easter. I don't like these delays."

"*April* 4.—It is my present intention to come home next Thursday unless there is anything special coming on that evening, which I don't think very likely. It happens most unluckily that the Government has forced on the Coercion Bill to the exclusion of corn, for owing to the pertinacious delay thrown in the way of its passing by the Irish members, I don't expect it will be read the first time before Easter, and as for corn there is no chance of hearing of it again till after the holidays. I wish to God we were out of the mess."

"*April* 6.—We are still in the midst of our Irish squabble, and there is no chance of getting upon corn again before Easter. It is most mortifying this delay, for it gives the chance of the chapter of accidents to the enemy."

"*April* 23.—We are still in as great suspense as ever about the next step in the Corn Bill. The Irishmen threaten to delay us till next Friday week at least. But I hear that the general opinion is that the postponement will be favourable to the success of the measure in the Lords."

"*April* 25.—You will receive a *Times* by the post containing an amusing account of a flare-up in the House between Disraeli and Peel respecting some remarks of mine. You will also see that one of the Irish patriots has been trying to play us false about corn. But I don't find that the bulk of the liberal Irish members are inclined to any overt act of treachery, although I fear that many are in their hearts averse to *our* repeal."

"*April* 27.—Last Saturday I dined at Lord Monteagle's, and took Lady —— in to dinner, and really I must say I have not for five years met with a new acquaintance so much to my taste. I met there young Gough, son of Lord

1846. Æt. 42. Gough, the hero of the Sutlej, and had some interesting private talk with him about the doings of his father. We are going on again to-night with the Coercion Bill, and there seems to be a prospect of the Irish repealers pursuing a little more conciliatory course towards us. I hear that my speech on Friday is considered to have been very judicious, inasmuch as I spoke soft words, calculated to turn aside the wrath of the Irishmen. They are a very odd and unmanageable set, and I fear many of the most liberal patriots amongst them would, if they could find an excuse, pick a quarrel with us and vote against Free Trade, or stay away. They are landlords, and like the rest afraid of rent."

"*April* 29.—I have three letters from you, but must not attempt now to give you a long reply. We are meeting this morning as usual on a Wednesday, at twelve o'clock till six in the House, and I have therefore little time for my correspondence. The Factory Bill is coming on which I wish to attend to. . . . . You may tell our League friends that I begin to see daylight through the fog in which we have been so long enveloped. O'Connell tells me that we shall certainly divide upon the first reading of the Coercion Bill on Friday. That being out of the way, we shall go on to Corn on Monday, and next week will I trust see the Bill fairly out of the House. The general opinion is that the delay has been favourable to our prospects in the Lords."

"*May* 2.—The Corn measure comes on next Monday, and will continue before the House till it passes. Some people seem to expect that it will get out of our hands on Friday next. I still hear more and more favourable reports of the probable doings in the Lords."

"*May* 8.—The fact is we are here in a dead state of suspense, not quite certain what will be our fate in the Lords, and yet every day trying to learn something new,

and still left in the same doubt. It is now said that we shall pass the third and last reading of the Bill in the Commons on Tuesday next. Then it will go up to the Lords, where the debates will be much shorter, for the Peers have no constituents to talk to. Lord Ducie says he thinks there will be only two nights' debates upon the second reading. Still I am told the Queen's assent cannot be given to the measure before the middle of June, and very likely not till the 20th. I dined last Saturday at Labouchere's, in Belgrave Square, and sat beside Lady ——, a very handsome, sprightly and unaffected dame. There was some very good singing after dinner. I have been obliged to mount a white cravat at these dinner-parties much against my will, but I found a black stock was quite out of character. So you see I am getting on."

"*May* 11.—I have been running about, sightseeing the last day or two. On Saturday I went to the Horticultural Society's great flower-show at Chiswick. It was a glorious day, and a most charming scene. How different from the drenching weather you and I experienced there."

"*May* 13.—I am sorry to say I see no chance of a division on the Corn Bill till Saturday morning at one or two o'clock, and that has quite thrown me out in my calculations about coming down. I fear I shall not be able to see you for a week or two later. The Factory Bill, upon which I must speak and vote, is before the House, and it is impossible to say when the division will take place. I have two invitations for dinner on Saturday, one to Lord Fitzwilliam's, and the other to Lord and Lady John Russell, and if I remain over that day, I shall prefer the latter, as I have twice refused invitations from them. I assure you I would rather find myself taking tea with you, than dining with lords and ladies. Do not trouble yourself to write to me

1846. every day. I don't wish to make it a task. But tell me all
ÆT. 42. the gossip."

"*May* 15.[7]—There is at last a prospect of reading the Bill a third time to night. The Protectionists promise fairly enough, but I have seen too much of their tactics to feel certain that they will not have another adjournment. There is a revival of rumours again that the Lords will alter the Bill in committee, and attempt a fixed-duty compromise, or a perpetuation of the reduced scale. It is certain to pass the second reading by a majority of thirty or forty, but it is not safe in the committee, where proxies don't count. I should not now be able to leave town till the end of the month, when I shall take a week or ten days for the Whitsuntide recess."

"*May* 16.—I last night had the glorious privilege of giving a vote in the majority for the third reading of the bill for the total repeal of the Corn Law. The Bill is now out of the House, and will go up to the Lords on Monday. I trust we shall never hear the name of 'Corn' again in the Commons. There was a good deal of cheering and waving of hats when the Speaker had put the question, 'that this Bill do now pass.' Lord Morpeth, Macaulay, and others came and shook hands with me, and congratulated me on the triumph of our cause. I did not speak, simply for the reason that I was afraid that I should give more life to the debate, and afford an excuse for another adjournment; otherwise I could have made a telling and conciliatory appeal. Villiers tried to speak at three o'clock this morning, but I did not think he took the right tone. He was fierce against the protectionists, and only irritated them, and they wouldn't hear him. The reports about the doings in the Lords are still not satisfactory or conclusive. Many people

[7] To F. W. Cobden.

fear still that they will alter the measure with a view to a compromise. But I hope we shall escape any further trouble upon the question. . . . I feel little doubt that I shall be able to pay a visit to your father at Midsummer. At least nothing but the Lords throwing back the Bill upon the country could prevent my going into Wales at the time, for I shall confidently expect them to decide one way or another by the 15th of June. I shall certainly vote and speak against the Factory Bill next Friday."

"*May* 18.—We are so beset by contradictory rumours, that I know not what to say about our prospects in the Lords. Our good, conceited friend —— told me on Wednesday that he knew the Peers would *not* pass the measure, and on Saturday he assured me that they *would*. And this is a fair specimen of the way in which rumours vary from day to day. This morning Lord Monteagle called on me, and was strongly of opinion that they would 'move on, and not stand in people's way.' A few weeks will now decide the matter one way or another. I think I told you that I dined at Moffat's last Wednesday. As usual he gave us a first-rate dinner. After leaving Moffat's at eleven o'clock, I went to a squeeze at Mrs. ——. It was as usual hardly possible to get inside the drawing-room doors. I only remained a quarter of an hour and then went home. On Saturday I dined at Lord and Lady John's, and met a select party, whose names I see in to-day's papers. . . . I am afraid if I associate much with the aristocracy, they will spoil me. I am already half seduced by the fascinating ease of their parties."

"*May* 19.[8]—I received your letters with the enclosures. We are still on the tenter-hooks respecting the conduct of the Lords. There is, however, one cheering point: the majority on

[8] *To F. W. Cobden.*

1846. the second reading is improving in the stock-books of the
ÆT. 42. whippers-in. It is now expected that there will be forty to fifty majority at the second reading. This will of course give us a better margin for the committee. The Government and Lord John (who is very anxious to get the measure through) are doing all they can to insure success. The ministers from Lisbon, Florence and other continental cities (where they are Peers) are coming home to vote in committee. Last night was a propitious beginning in the Lords. The Duke of Richmond was in a passion, and his tone and manner did not look like a winner."

"*May* 20.—We are still worried incessantly with rumours of intrigues at headquarters. Every day yields a fresh report. But I will write fuller to-morrow. Villiers is at my elbow with a new piece of gossip."

"*May* 20.[1]—I have looked through your letter to Lord Stanley, and will tell you frankly that I felt surprise that you should have wasted your time and thrown away your talents upon so very hopeless an object. He will neither read nor listen to facts or arguments, and after his double refusal to see a deputation, I really think it would be too great a condescension if you were to solicit his attention to the question at issue. This is my opinion, and Bright and Wilson, to whom I have spoken, appear to agree. But if you would like the letter to be handed to him, I will do it. Your evidence before the Lords' Committee was again the topic of eulogy from Lord Monteagle yesterday, who called on me with a copy of his report. Everything is in uncertainty as to what the Lords will do in Committee. The Protectionists have had a great flare-up to-day at Willis's Rooms, and they appear to be in great spirits. I fear we shall yet be obliged to launch our bark again upon the troubled waters of agitation. But in the mean-

[1] *To H. Ashworth.*

time the calm moderation of the League is our best title to public support if we should be driven to an appeal to the country."

"*May* 22.—Yesterday I dined with Lord and Lady Fortescue, and met Lords Normanby, Campbell, and Morpeth. I sat at dinner beside the Duchess of Inverness, the widow of the Duke of Sussex, a plain little woman, but clever, and a very decided Free Trader."

"*May* 23.—I have sent you a *Chronicle* containing a brief report of my few remarks in the House last night. Be good enough to cut it out, and send it to me that I may correct it for Hansard. It was two o'clock when I spoke, and it was impossible to do justice to the subject. Count on my being at home, saving accidents, on Thursday to tea."

"*May* 23.—A meeting of the Whig Peers has to-day been held at Lord Lansdowne's, and they have unanimously resolved to support the Government measure in all its details. There were several of these Whig Peers who up to yesterday were understood to be resolved to vote in Committee for a small fixed duty, and the danger was understood to be with them. They were beginning, however, to be afraid that Peel might dissolve, and thus annihilate the Whig party, and so they are as a party more inclined to let the measure pass now in order to get a chance of coming in after Peel's retirement. I am assured by Edward Ellice, one of the late Whig Cabinet, that the bill is now safe and that it will be law in three weeks. Heaven send us such good luck!"

"*June* 10.[1]—There is another fit of apprehension about the Corn Bill owing to the uncertainty of Peel's position. I can't understand his motive for constantly poking his coercive bill in our faces at these critical moments. The Lords will take courage at anything that seems to weaken the Government

[1] *To F. W. Cobden.*

1846. morally. They are like a fellow going to be hanged who
ÆT. 42. looks out for a reprieve, and is always hoping for a lucky escape until the drop falls."

"*June* 13.—I have scarcely a doubt that in less than ten days the Corn Bill will be law. But we cannot say it is as safe as if carried. . . . I breakfasted yesterday morning with Monckton Milnes, and met Suleiman Pasha, Prince Louis Napoleon, Count D'Orsay, D'Israeli, and a queer party of odds and ends. The Pasha is a strong-built energetic-looking man of sixty. After breakfast he got upon the subject of military tactics, and fought the battle of Nezib over again with forks, spoons, and tumblers upon the table in a very animated way. The young Napoleon is evidently a weak fellow, but mild and amiable. I was disappointed in the physique of Count D'Orsay, who is a fleshy animal-looking creature, instead of the *spirituel* person I expected to see. He certainly dresses *à merveille*, and is besides a clever fellow."

"*June* 16.—The Corn Bill is now safe beyond all risk, and we may act as if it had passed. . . . I met Sir James Clark and Doctor Combe at Kingston on Sunday, and we took tea together. Sir James was strong in his advice to me to go abroad, and the doctor was half disposed with his niece to go with us to Egypt. Combe and I went to Hampton Court Gardens in a carriage, and had a walk there. I am afraid Peel is going out immediately after the Corn Bill passes, which will be a very great damper to the country; and the excitement in the country consequent on a change of Government, will, I fear, interfere with a public project in which you and I are interested."

"*June* 18.—The lords will not read the Corn Bill the third time before Tuesday next, and I shall be detained in town to vote on the Coercion Bill on Thursday, after which I shall leave for Manchester. I send you a *Spectator* paper, by

which you will see that I am a 'likeable' person. I hope you will appreciate this." 1846. ÆT. 42.

"*June* 23.—I have been plagued for several days with sitting to Herbert for the picture of the Council of the League, and it completely upsets my afternoons. Besides my mind has been more than ever upon the worry about that affair which is to come off after the Corn Bill is settled, and about which I hear all sorts of reports. You must therefore excuse me if I could not sit down to write a letter of news. . . . I thought the Corn Bill would, certainly be read the third time on Tuesday (to-morrow), but I now begin to think it will be put off till Thursday. There is literally no end to this suspense. But there are reports of Peel being out of office on Friday next, and the Peers may yet ride restive."

"*June* 26.—MY DEAREST KATE,—Hurrah! Hurrah! the Corn Bill is law, and now my work is done. I shall come down to-morrow morning by the six o'clock train in order to be present at a Council meeting at three, and shall hope to be home in time for a late tea."

By what has always been noticed as a striking coincidence, and has even been heroically described as Nemesis, the Corn Bill passed the House of Lords on the same night on which the Coercion Bill was rejected in the House of Commons. On this memorable night the last speech before the division was made by Cobden. He could not, he said, regard the vote which he was about to give against the Irish Bill as one of no confidence, for it was evident that the Prime Minister could not be maintained in power by a single vote. If he had a majority that night, Lord George Bentinck would soon put him to the test again on some other subject. In any case, Cobden refused to stultify himself as Lord George and his friends were doing, by voting black to be

1846.
ÆT. 42.

white merely to serve a particular purpose. But though he was bound to vote against the Coercion Bill, he rejoiced to think that Sir Robert Peel would carry with him the esteem and gratitude of a greater number of the population of this empire than had ever followed the retirement of any other Minister.

This closed the debate. The Government were beaten by the heavy majority of seventy-three. The fallen Minister announced his resignation of office to the House three days later (June 29) in a remarkable speech. As Mr. Disraeli thinks, it was considered one of glorification and of pique. But the candour of posterity will insist on recognizing in every period of it the exaltation of a patriotic and justifiable pride. In this speech Sir Robert Peel pronounced that eulogium which is well worn, it is true, but which cannot be omitted here. "In reference to our proposing these measures," he said, "I have no wish to rob any person of the credit which is justly due to him for them. But I may say that neither the gentlemen sitting on the benches opposite, nor myself, nor the gentlemen sitting round me—I say that neither of us are the parties who are strictly entitled to the merit. There has been a combination of parties, and that combination of parties together with the influence of the Government, has led to the ultimate success of the measures. But, Sir, there is a name which ought to be associated with the success of these measures: it is not the name of the noble Lord, the member for London, neither is it my name. Sir, the name which ought to be, and which will be associated with the success of these measures is the name of a man who, acting, I believe, from pure and disinterested motives, has advocated their cause with untiring energy, and by appeals to reason, expressed by an eloquence, the more to be admired because it was unaffected and unadorned—the name which ought to be and will be associated with the success of these

measures is the name of Richard Cobden. Without scruple, Sir, I attribute the success of these measures to him." 1846. ÆT. 42.

Cumbrous as they are in expression, the words were received with loud approbation in the House and with fervent sympathy in the country, and they made a deep mark on men's minds, because they were felt to be not less truly than magnanimously spoken.

CHAPTER XVII.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SIR ROBERT PEEL.—CESSATION OF THE WORK OF THE LEAGUE.

1846. ÆT. 42. THREE days before the vote which broke up the Administration, Cobden had taken a rather singular step. As he afterwards told a friend, it was the only thing that he ever did as a member of the League without the knowledge of Mr. Bright. He wrote a long and very earnest letter to the Prime Minister, urging him, in the tolerably certain event of defeat on the Coercion Bill, to dissolve Parliament.

"76, Upper Berkeley Street, Portman Square,
"23 *June*, 1846.

"SIR,—I have tried to think of a plan by which I could have half an hour's conversation with you upon public matters, but I do not think it would be possible for us to have an interview with the guarantee of privacy. I therefore take a course which will be startling to you, by committing the thoughts which are passing in my mind freely to paper. Let me premise that no human being has or ever will have the slightest knowledge or suspicion that I am writing this letter. I keep no copy, and ask for no reply. I only stipulate that you will put it in the fire when you have perused it, without in any way alluding to its contents, or permitting it to meet the eye of any other person what-

ever.[1] I shall not waste a word in apologising for the directness—nay, the abruptness—with which I state my views. 1846. Æт. 42.

"It is said you are about to resign. I assume that it is so. On public grounds this will be a national misfortune. The trade of the country, which has languished through six months during the time that the Corn Bill has been in suspense, and which would now assume a more confident tone, will be again plunged into renewed unsettlement by your resignation. Again, the great principle of commercial freedom with which your name is associated abroad, will be to some extent jeopardized by your retirement. It will fill the whole civilized world with doubt and perplexity to see a minister, whom they believed all-powerful, because he was able to carry the most difficult measure of our time, fall at the very moment of his triumph. Foreigners, who do not comprehend the machinery of our government, or the springs of party movements, will doubt if the people of England are really favourable to Free Trade. They will have misgivings of the permanence of our new policy, and this doubt will retard their movements in the same direction. You have probably thought of all this.

"My object, however, in writing is more particularly to draw your attention from the state of parties in the House, as towards your government, to the position you hold as Prime Minister in the opinion of the country. Are you aware of the strength of your position with the country? If so, why bow to a chance medley of factions in the Legislature,

[1] Cobden did not know that Sir Robert Peel put nothing into the fire. He once said to one of his younger followers,—"My dear ——, no public man who values his character, ever destroys a letter or a paper." As a matter of fact, Peel put up every night all the letters and notes that had come to him in the day, and it is understood that considerably more than a hundred thousand papers are in the possession of his literary executors. Some who exercise themselves upon the minor moralities of private life, will be shocked that he did not respect his correspondent's stipulation.

1846. with a nation ready and waiting to be called to your rescue?
ÆT. 42. Few persons have more opportunities forced upon them than myself of being acquainted with the relative forces of public opinion. I will not speak of the populace, which to a man is with you; but of the active and intelligent middle classes, with whom you have engrossed a sympathy and interest greater than was ever before possessed by a minister. The period of the Reform Bill witnessed a greater enthusiasm, but it was less rational and less enduring. It was directed towards half a dozen popular objects—Grey, Russell, Brougham, etc. Now, the whole interest centres in yourself. You represent the IDEA of the age, and it has no other representative amongst statesmen. You could be returned to Parliament with acclamation by any one of the most numerous and wealthy constituencies of the kingdom. Fox once said that 'Middlesex and Yorkshire together make all England.' You may add Lancashire, and call them your own. Are you justified towards the Queen, the people, and the great question of our generation, in abandoning this grand and glorious position? Will you yourself stand the test of an impartial historian?

"You will perceive that I point to a dissolution as the solution of your difficulties in Parliament. I anticipate your objections. You will say,—'If I had had the grounds for a dissolution whilst the Corn Bill was pending, I should have secured a majority for that measure; but now I have no such exclusive call upon the country, by which to set aside old party distinctions.' There are no substantial lines of demarcation now in the country betwixt the Peelites and the so-called Whig or Liberal party. The Chiefs are still keeping up a show of hostility in the House; but their troops out of doors have piled their arms, and are mingling and fraternising together. This fusion must sooner or later take place in the House. The independent men, nearly all who do not

look for office, are ready for the amalgamation. They are with difficulty kept apart by the instinct of party discipline. One dissolution, judiciously brought about, would release every one of them from those bonds which time and circumstances have so greatly loosened. 1846. ÆT. 42.

"I have said that a dissolution should be judiciously brought about. I assume, of course, that you would not deem it necessary to stand or fall by the present Coercion Bill. I assume, moreover, that you are alive to the all-pervading force of the arguments you have used in favour of Free Trade principles, that they are eternal truths, applicable to all articles of exchange, as well as corn; and that they must be carried out in every item of our tariff. I assume that you foresaw, when you propounded the Corn Bill, that it involved the necessity of applying the same principle to sugar, coffee, etc. This assumption is the basis of all I have said, or have to say. Any other hypothesis would imply that you had not grasped in its full comprehensiveness the greatness of your position, or the means by which you could alone achieve the greatest triumph of a century. For I need not tell you that the only way in which the soul of a great nation can be stirred, is by appealing to its sympathies with a true principle in its unalloyed simplicity. Nay, further, it is necessary for the concentration of a people's mind that an individual should become the incarnation of a principle. It is from this necessity that I have been identified, out of doors, beyond my poor deserts, as the exponent of Free Trade. You, and no other, are its embodiment amongst statesmen;—and it is for this reason alone that I venture to talk to you in a strain that would otherwise be grossly impertinent.

"To return to the practical question of a dissolution. Assuming that your Cabinet will concur, or that you will place yourself in a position independently of others to appeal to the

1846. ÆT. 42. country, this is the course I should pursue under your circumstances. I would contrive to make it so far a judgment of the electors upon my own conduct as a Minister, as to secure support to myself in the next Parliament to carry out my principles. I would say in my place in Parliament to Lord George Bentinck and his party,—'I have been grossly maligned in this House, and in the newspaper press. I have been charged with treachery to the electors of this empire. My motives have been questioned, my character vilified, my policy denounced as destructive of the national interests. I have borne all this, looking only to the success of what I deemed a pressing public measure. I will not, however, stand convicted of these charges in the eyes of the civilised world until, at least, the nation has had the opportunity of giving its verdict. I will appeal to the electors of this empire; they shall decide between you and me—between your policy and mine. By their judgment I am content to stand or fall. They shall decide, not only upon my past policy, but whether the principles I have advocated shall be applied in their completeness to every item of our tariff. I am prepared to complete the work I have begun. All I ask is time, and the support of an enlightened and generous people.'

"This tone is essential, because it will release the members of a new Parliament from their old party ties. The hustings cry will be, 'Peel and Free Trade,' and every important constituency will send its members up to support *you*. I would dissolve within the next two months. Some people might urge that the counties would be in a less excited state, if it were deferred; but any disadvantage in that respect would be more than compensated by the gain in the town constituencies. I would go to the country with my Free Trade laurels fresh upon my brow, and whilst the grievance under which I was suffering from the outrages of

Protectionist speakers and writers was still rankling in the minds of people, whose sympathies have been greatly aroused by the conduct of Lord George Bentinck and his organs of the press towards you. Besides, I believe there are many county members who would tell their constituents honestly that Protection was a hopeless battle-cry, and that they would not pledge themselves to a system of personal persecution against yourself. Some of your persecutors would not enter the next Parliament.[2] Now I will anticipate what is passing in your mind. Do you shrink from the post of governing through the *boná fide* representatives of the middle class? Look at the facts, and can the country be otherwise ruled at all? There must be an end of the juggle of parties, the mere representatives of traditions, and some man must of necessity rule the State through its governing class. The Reform Bill decreed it; the passing of the Corn Bill has realized it. Are you afraid of the middle class? You must know them better than to suppose that they are given to extreme or violent measures. They are not democratic.

"Again, to anticipate what is passing in your thoughts. Do you apprehend a difficulty in effacing the line which separates you from the men on the opposite side of the House? I answer that the leaders of the Opposition personate no idea. You embody in your own person the idea of the age. Do you fear that other questions, which are latent on the 'Liberal' side of the House, would embarrass you if you were at the head of a considerable section of its members? What are they? Questions of organic reform have no vitality in the country, nor are they likely to have any force in the Hous until your work is done. Are the

[2] "Among other things," Cobden wrote to Mr. Parkes, "I remember mentioning the fact that Disraeli could not be again returned for Shrewsbury."

1846. Whig leaders more favourable than yourself to institutional
ÆT. 42. changes of any kind? Practical reforms are the order of the day, and you are by common consent the practical reformer. The Condition of England Question—there is your mission!

"As respects Ireland. That has become essentially a practical question too. If you are prepared to deal with Irish landlords as you have done with English, there will be the means of satisfying the people. You are not personally unpopular, but the reverse, with Irish members.

"Lastly, as respects your health. God only knows how you have endured, without sinking, the weight of public duties and the harassings of private remonstrances and importunities during the last six months. But I am of opinion that a dissolution, judiciously brought on, would place you comparatively on velvet for five years. It would lay in the dust your tormentors. It would explode the phantom of a Whig Opposition, and render impossible such a combination as is now, I fear, covertly harassing you. But it is on the subject of your health alone that I feel I may be altogether at fault, and urging you to what may be impossible. In my public views of your position and power, I am not mistaken. Whatever may be the difficulties in your Cabinet, whether one or half-a-score of your colleagues may secede, you have in your own individual will the power, backed by the country, to accomplish all that the loftiest ambition or the truest patriotism ever aspired to identify with the name and fame of one individual.

"I hardly know how to conclude without apologising for this most extraordinary liberty. If you credit me, as I believe you will, when I say that I have no object on earth but a desire to advance the interests of the nation and of humanity in writing to you, any apology will be unnecessary. If past experience do not indicate my motives, time, I hope, will.

"It is my intention, on the passing of the Corn Bill, to make instant arrangements for going abroad for at least a year, and it is not likely after Friday next that I shall appear in the House. This is my reason for venturing upon so abrupt a communication of all that is passing in my mind. I reiterate the assurance that no person will know that I have addressed you, and repeating my request that this letter be exclusively for your own eyes, 1846. ÆT. 42.

I have the honour to be, Sir, respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

RICHARD COBDEN.

"Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Peel, Bart. M.P."

"P.S. I am of opinion that a dissolution, in the way I suggested, with yourself still in power, would very much facilitate the easy return of those on your side who voted with you. And any members of your government who had a difficulty with their present seats would, if they adhered to you, be at a premium with any free constituency. Were I in your position, although as a principle I do not think Cabinet ministers ought to encumber themselves with large constituencies, I would accept an invitation to stand for London, Middlesex, South Lancashire, or West Yorkshire, expressly to show to the world the estimation in which my principles were held, and declaring at the same time that that was my sole motive for one Parliament only."

To this the Prime Minister replied on the following day, writing at the green table, and listening to the course of the debate as he wrote:—

"House of Commons,

"*Wednesday, June 24th*, 1846.

"SIR,—I should not write from this place if I intended to weigh expressions, or to write to you in any other spirit than

1846. ÆT. 42. that of frankness and unreserve, by which your letter is characterized. First let me say that I am very sorry to hear you are about to leave London immediately. I meant to take the earliest opportunity, after the passing of the Corn Bill, to ask for the satisfaction of making your personal acquaintance, and of expressing a hope that every recollection of past personal differences was obliterated for ever. If you were aware of the opinions I have been expressing during the last two years to my most intimate friends with regard to the purity of your motives, your intellectual power, and ability to give effect to it by real eloquence—you would share in my surprise that all this time I was supposed to harbour some hostile personal feeling towards you.

"I need not give you the assurance that I shall regard your letter as a communication more purely confidential than if it had been written to me by some person united to me by the closest bonds of private friendship.

"I do not think I mistake my position.

"I would have given, as I said I would give, every proof of fidelity to the measures which I introduced at the beginning of this Session. I would have instantly advised dissolution if dissolution had been necessary to ensure their passing. I should have thought such an exercise of the Prerogative justifiable—if it had given me a majority on no other question. If my retention of office, under any circumstances however adverse, had been necessary or would have been probably conducive to the success of those measures, I would have retained it. They will, however, I confidently trust, be the law of the land on Friday next.

"I do not agree with you as to the effect of my retirement from office as a justifiable ground, *after* the passing of those measures.

"You probably know or will readily believe that which is the truth—that such a position as mine entails the severest

sacrifices. The strain on the mental power is far too severe; I will say nothing of ceremony—of the extent of private correspondence about mere personal objects—of the odious power which patronage confers—but what must be my feelings when I retire from the House of Commons after eight or nine hours' attendance on frequently superfluous or frivolous debate, and feel conscious that all that time should have been devoted to such matters as our relations with the United States—the adjustment of the Oregon dispute—our Indian policy—our political or commercial relations with the great members of the community of powerful nations?

"You will believe, I say, if you reflect on these things, that office and power may be anything but an object of ambition, and that I must be insane if I could have been induced by anything but a sense of public duty to undertake what I have undertaken in this Session.

"But the world, the great and small vulgar, is not of this opinion. I am sorry to say they do not and cannot comprehend the motives which influence the *best* actions of public men. They think that public men change their course from corrupt motives, and their feeling is so predominant, that the character of public men is injured, and their practical authority and influence impaired, if in such a position as mine at the present moment any defeat be submitted to, which ought under ordinary circumstances to determine the fate of a government, or there be any clinging to office.

"I think I should do more homage to the principles on which the Corn and Customs Bills are founded, by retirement on a perfectly justifiable ground, than either by retaining office without its proper authority, without the ability *to carry through* that which I undertake, or by encountering the serious risk of defeat after dissolution.

1846. "I do not think a minister is justified in advising disso-
ÆT. 42. lution under such circumstances as the present, unless he has a strong conviction that he will have a majority based not on temporary personal sympathies, not on concurrence of sentiment on one branch of policy, however important that may be, but on general approval of his whole policy.

"I should not think myself entitled to exercise this great prerogative, for the sole or the main purpose of deciding a personal question between myself and inflamed Protectionists—namely, whether I had recently given good advice and honest advice to the Crown. The verdict of the country might be in my favour on that issue; but I might fail in obtaining a majority which should enable me after the first excitement had passed away, to carry on the government, that is *to do* what I think conducive to the public welfare. I do not consider the evasion of difficulties, and the postponement of troublesome questions, the carrying on of a government.

"I could perhaps have parried *even your power,* and *carried on the government* in one sense for three or four years longer, if I could have consented to halloo on a majority in both houses to defend the (not yet defunct) Corn Law of 1842, 'in all its integrity.'

"If you say that I individually at this moment embody or personify an idea, be it so. Then I must be very careful that, being the organ and representative of a prevailing and magnificent conception of the public mind, I do not sully that which I represent by warranting the suspicion even, that I am using the power it confers for any personal object.

"You have said little, and I have said nothing, about Ireland.. But if I am defeated on the Irish Bill, will it be possible to divest dissolution (following soon after that defeat) of the character of an appeal to Great Britain against

Ireland on a question of Irish Coercion? I should deeply lament this. 1846. ÆT. 42.

"I will ask you also to consider this. After the passing of the Corn and Customs Bill, considering how much trade has suffered of late from delays, debates, and uncertainty as to the final result, does not this country stand in need of *repose?* Would not a desperate political conflict throughout the length and breadth of the land impair or defer the beneficial effect of the passing of those measures? If it would, we are just in that degree abating satisfaction with the past, and reconcilement to the continued application of the principles of Free Trade.

"Consider also the effect of dissolution in Ireland; the rejection of the Irish Bill immediately preceding it.

"I have written this during the progress of the debates, to which I have been obliged to give some degree of attention. I may, therefore, have very imperfectly explained my views and feelings, but imperfect as that explanation may be, it will I hope suffice to convince you that I receive your communication in the spirit in which it was conceived, and that I set a just value on your good opinion and esteem.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,

With equal respect for your character and abilities,

Your faithful Servant,

ROBERT PEEL."

It is easy to understand the attractiveness of the idea with which Cobden was now possessed. It was thoroughly worked out in his own mind. By means of the forty-shilling freehold, the middle and industrious classes were to acquire a preponderance of political power. It was not the workmen as such, in whom Cobden had confidence. "You never heard me," he said to the Protectionists in the House

1846. ÆT. 42. of Commons, "quote the superior judgment of the working classes in any deliberations in this assembly: you never heard me cant about the superior claims of the working classes to arbitrate on this great question."[3] Political power was to be in the hands of people who had public spirit enough to save the thirty pounds or so that would buy them a qualification, if they could not get it in any other way. These middle and industrious classes would insist on pacific and thrifty administration, as the political condition of popular development. Circumstances had brought forward a powerful representative of such a policy in Sir Robert Peel; and Peel at the head of a fusion of Whigs and Economic Liberals would carry the country along the ways of a new and happier civilization. The old Whig watchword of Civil and Religious Liberty belonged to another generation, and it had ceased to be the exclusive cry of the Whigs even now. The repeal of the Corn Laws had broken up all parties. "I felt," said Cobden, "that I as much belonged to Sir James Graham's party, as I did to Lord John Russell's party."[4] There must be a great reconstruction, and Sir Robert Peel was to preside over it.

Such a scheme was admirable in itself. In substance it was destined to be partially realized one day, not by Peel, but by the most powerful and brilliant of his lieutenants. The singular fate which had marked the Minister's past career was an invincible obstacle to Cobden's project. It was too late. All the accepted decencies of party would have been outraged if the statesman who had led an army of Tory country gentlemen in one Parliament, should have hurried to lead an army of liberal manufacturers in the next. The transition was too violent, the prospect of success too much of an accident. Nobody, again, could expect with Lord John

[3] *Speeches*, i. 372. Feb. 27, 1846. [4] *Speeches*, ii. 507.

Russell's view, and it was a just view, of Peel's long and successful opposition to measures and principles which he immediately took for his own on coming into power, that they should have been able to unite their forces under the lead of either of them. It would have seemed to Lord John quite as equivocal a transaction as the too famous coalition between Charles Fox and Lord North. What he did was to offer posts in his administration to three of Sir Robert Peel's late colleagues,[1] and this was as far as he could go. They declined, and the country was thrown back upon a Whig Administration of the old type. When that Administration came to an end, the fusion which Cobden had desired came to pass. But Sir Robert Peel was there no more. The power which he would have used in furtherance of the wise and beneficent policy cherished by Cobden, fell into the hands of Lord Palmerston, who represented every element in the national character and traditions which Cobden thought most retrograde and dangerous.

Happily for the peace of the moment, these mortifications of the future were unknown and unsuspected. Ten days after his letter to the fallen Minister, Cobden received a communication from his successor.

"Chesham Place, *July* 2, 1846.

"MY DEAR SIR,—The Queen having been pleased to entrust me with the task of forming an Administration, I have been anxious to place in office those who have maintained in our recent struggle the principles of Free Trade against Monopoly.

"The letter I received from you in November last, declining office, and the assurances I have received that you are going abroad for your health, have in combination with other circumstances prevented my asking your aid, nor,

[1] Lord Dalhousie, Sir James Graham, and Mr. Sidney Herbert.

1846. had I proposed to you to join the Government could I have
ÆT. 42. placed you anywhere but in the Cabinet. I have not hitherto perceived that you were disposed to adopt political life, apart from Free Trade, as a pursuit. I hope, however, you will do so, and that on your return to this country you will join a liberal Administration.

"I care little whether the present arrangement remains for any long period in the direction of affairs. But I am anxious to see a large Liberal majority in the House of Commons devoted to improvement, both in this country and in Ireland. Mr. Charles Villiers has declined to take any office. I am about to propose to Mr. Milner Gibson to become Vice-President of the Board of Trade.

"I remain, with sentiments of regard and respect,

Yours very faithfully,

J. RUSSELL."

What were the "other circumstances" which prevented Lord John Russell from inviting Cobden to join his Government, we can only guess. It is pretty certain that they related to a project of which a good deal had been heard during the last four or five months. There would undeniably have been some difficulty in giving high office in the state to a politician whose friends were at the time publicly collecting funds for a national testimonial of a pecuniary kind. Whether the Whig chief was glad or not to have this excuse for leaving Cobden out of his Cabinet, the ground of the omission was not unreasonable.

The final meeting of the League took place on the same day on which Lord John Russell wrote to explain that he intended to show his appreciation of what was due to those "who had maintained in our recent struggle the principles of Free Trade against Monopoly," by offering Mr. Gibson a post without either dignity or influence. The Leaguers

were too honestly satisfied with the triumph of the cause for which they had banded themselves together eight years ago, to take any interest in so small a matter as the distribution of good things in Downing Street and Whitehall. That was no affair of theirs. It was enough for them that they had removed a great obstacle to the material prosperity of the country, that they had effectually vindicated what the best among them believed to be an exalted and civilizing social principle, and that in doing this they had failed to reverence no law, shaken no institution, and injured no class nor order. It is impossible not to envy the feelings of men who had done so excellent a piece of work for their country in so spirited and honourable a way. When the announcement was made from the Chair that the Anti-Corn-Law League stood conditionally dissolved, a deep silence fell upon them all, as they reflected that they were about finally to separate from friends with whom they had been long and closely connected, and that they had no longer in common the pursuit of an object which had been the most cherished of their lives.[6]

1846. ÆT. 42.

The share which the League had in procuring the consummation of the commercial policy that Huskisson had first opened four-and-twenty years before, is not always rightly understood. One practical effect of a mischievous kind has followed from this misunderstanding. It has led people into the delusion that organization, if it be only on a sufficiently gigantic scale and sufficiently unrelenting in its importunity, is capable of winning any virtuous cause. The agitation against the Corn Laws had several pretty obvious peculiarities, which ought not to be overlooked. A large and wealthy class had the strongest material interest in repeal. What was important was that this class now happened to represent the great army of consumers.

[6] See Mr. Bright's speech, quoted in Mr. Ashworth's little book, p. 213.

1846. Protection as a principle had long ago begun to give way,
ÆT. 42. but it might have remained for a long time to come, if it had not been found in intolerable antagonism with the growing giant of industrial interests. It is not a piece of cynicism, but an important truth, to say that what brings great changes of policy is the spontaneous shifting and readjustment of interests, not the discovery of new principles. What the League actually did was this. Its energetic propagandism succeeded in making people believe in a general way that Free Trade was right, when the time should come. When the Irish famine brought the crisis, public opinion was prepared for the solution, and when protection on corn had disappeared, there was nothing left to support protection on sugar and ships. Then, again, the perseverance of the agitation had a more direct effect, as has been already seen from Cobden's letters. It frightened the ruling class. First, it prevented Peel, in the autumn of 1845, from opening the ports by an order in council. Second, it forced the Whigs out of their fixed duty. Third, it made the House of Lords afraid of throwing out the repealing Bill.

There is another important circumstance which ought not to be left out of sight. One secret of the power of the League both over the mind of Sir Robert Peel, and over parliament, arose from the narrow character of the representation at that time. The House of Commons to-day is a sufficiently imperfect and distorting mirror of public judgment and feeling. But things were far worse then. The total number of voters in the country was not much more than three quarters of a million; six sevenths of the male population of the country was excluded from any direct share of popular power; and property itself was so unfairly represented that Manchester, with double the value of the property of Buckinghamshire, returned only two members, while Bucks returned eleven. It was on this

account, as Cobden said, it was because Manchester could not have its fair representation in parliament, that it was obliged to organize a League and raise an agitation through the length and breadth of the land, in order to make itself felt.[7] It was just because the sober portion of the House of Commons were aware from how limited and exclusive a source they drew their authority, that the League represented so formidable, because so unknown, a force. 1846. ÆT. 42.

The same thought was present to the reflective mind of Peel. Cobden tells a story in one of his speeches which illustrates this. One evening in 1848 they were sitting in the House of Commons, when the news came that the government of Louis Philippe had been overthrown and a republic proclaimed. When the buzz of conversation ran round the House, as the startling intelligence was passed from member to member, Cobden said to Joseph Hume, who sat beside him, "Go across and tell Sir Robert Peel." Hume went to the front bench opposite, where Sir Robert was sitting in his usual isolation. "This comes," said Peel, when Hume had whispered the catastrophe, "this comes of trying to govern the country through a narrow representation in Parliament, without regarding the wishes of those outside. It is what this party behind me wanted me to do in the matter of the Corn Laws, and I would not do it."[8]

Now that the work was finally done, Cobden was free to set out on that journey over Europe, which the doctors had urged upon him as the best means of repose, and which he promised himself should be made an opportunity of diligently preaching the new gospel among the economic Gentiles. Before starting on this long pilgrimage, he went to stay for a month with his family in Wales. Two days after the final meeting of the League, he thus describes to

[7] *Speeches*, ii. 482. July 6, 1848. [8] *Speeches*, ii. 548. Aug. 18, 1859.

1846. one of the earliest of his fellow-workers the frame of mind
ÆT. 42. in which it had left him.

"I am going into the wilderness to pray for a return of the taste I once possessed for nature and simple quiet life. Here I am, in one day from Manchester, to the loveliest valley out of paradise. Ten years ago, before I was an agitator, I spent a day or two in this house. Comparing my sensations now with those I then experienced, I feel how much I have lost in winning public fame. The rough tempest has spoilt me for the quiet haven. I fear I shall never be able to cast anchor again. It seems as if some mesmeric hand were on my brain, or I was possessed by an unquiet fiend urging me forward in spite of myself. On Thursday I thought as I went to the meeting, that I should next day be a quiet and happy man. Next day brings me a suggestion from a private friend of the Emperor of Russia, assuring me that if instead of going to Italy and Egypt, I would take a trip to St. Petersburg, I could exercise an important influence upon the mind of Nicholas. Here am I at Llangollen, blind to the loveliness of nature, and only eager to be on the road to Russia, taking Madrid, Vienna Berlin, and Paris by the way! Let me see my boy to-morrow, who waits my coming at Machynlleth, and if he do not wean me, I am quite gone past recovery."*

His mind did not rest long. To Mr. Ashworth he wrote at the same date:—

"Now I am going to tell you of fresh projects that have been brewing in my brain. I have given up all idea of burying myself in Egypt or Italy. I am going on a private agitating tour through the Continent of Europe. The other day I got an intimation from Sir Roderick Murchison, the geologist—a friend and confidant of the Emperor of Russia—that I should have great influence with

* *To Mr. Paulton.* July 4, 1846.

him if I went to St. Petersburg. To-day I get a letter 1846.
from the Mayor of Bordeaux, written at Paris after dining Æt. 42.
at Duchatel's, the French Minister, conveying a suggestion from the latter that I should cross to Dieppe and visit the King of the French at his Chateau of Eu, where he would be glad to receive me between the 4th and 14th August.

"I have had similar hints respecting Madrid, Vienna, and Berlin. Well, I will, with God's assistance, during the next twelvemonth visit all the large states of Europe, see their potentates or statesmen, and endeavour to enforce those truths which have been irresistible at home. Why should I rust in inactivity? If the public spirit of my countrymen affords me the means of travelling as their missionary, I will be the first ambassador from the People of this country to the nations of the continent. I am impelled to this step by an instinctive emotion such as never deceived me. I feel that I could succeed in making out a stronger case for the prohibitive nations of Europe to compel them to adopt a freer system, than I had here to overturn our protective policy. But it is necessary that my design should not be made public, for that would create suspicion abroad. With the exception of a friend or two, under confidence, I shall not mention my intentions to anybody."

A few days later he wrote to George Combe, in a mood of more even balance:—

"Your affectionate letter of the 28th of June, has never been absent from my mind, although so long unacknowledged. I came here last week, with my wife and children, on a visit to her father's, and for a quiet ramble amongst the Welsh mountains. I thought I should be allowed to be forgotten after my address to my constituents. But every post brings me twenty or thirty letters, and such letters! I am teased

1846. Æt. 42. to death by place-hunters of every degree, who wish me to procure them Government appointments. Brothers of peers, ay, 'honourables' are amongst the number. I have but one answer for all, 'I would not ask a favour of the Ministry to serve my own brother.' Then I am still importuned worse than ever by beggars of every description. The enclosed is a specimen which reached me this morning; put it in the fire.[1] I often think, what must be the fate of Lord John or Peel with half the needy aristocracy knocking at the Treasury doors. Here is my excuse for not having answered your letter before.

"The settlement of the Free Trade controversy leaves the path free for other reforms, and Education must come next, and when I say that Education has yet to come, I need not add that I do not look for very great advances in our social state during our generation. You ask me whether the public mind is prepared for acting upon the moral law in our national affairs. I am afraid the animal is yet too predominant in the nature of Englishmen, and of men generally, to allow us to hope that the higher sentiments will gain their desired ascendency in your life-time or mine. I have always had one test of the tendency of the world: what is its estimate of war and warriors, and on what do nations rely for their mutual security? Brute force is, I fear, as much worshipped now,

[1] The letter referred to purported to be from a lady, who having nothing but her own exertions to depend upon, begged Mr. Cobden to become her "generous and noble-minded benefactor," to enable her to "begin to do something for herself." She says, "I do not see to use my needle; to rear poultry for London and other large market-towns is what my wishes are bent upon." For this purpose she suggests that Mr. Cobden should procure a loan of 5000*l.* to be advanced by himself and nine other friends in Manchester, where, she delicately insinuates, he is so much beloved that the process will be a very easy one for him. The loan, principal and interest, she promises shall be faithfully paid in ten years at the most. The writer mentions that she has her eye upon a small estate which will serve her purpose.

in the statues to Wellington and the peerage to Gough, as they were two thousand years ago in the colossal proportions of Hercules or Jupiter. Our international relations are an armed truce, each nation relying entirely on its power to defend itself by physical force. We may teach Christianity and morality in our families; but as a people, we are, I fear, still animals in our predominant propensities. 1846. Ær. 42.

"Perhaps you will remember that in my little pamphlets, I dwelt a good deal, ten years ago, upon the influence of our foreign policy upon our home affairs. I am as strongly as ever impressed with this view. I don't think the nations of the earth will have a chance of advancing morally in their domestic concerns to the degree of excellence which we sigh for, until the international relations of the world are put upon a different footing. The present system corrupts society, exhausts its wealth, raises up false gods for hero-worship, and fixes before the eyes of the rising generation a spurious if glittering standard of glory. It is because I do believe that the principle of Free Trade is calculated to alter the relations of the world for the better, in a moral point of view, that I bless God I have been allowed to take a prominent part in its advocacy. Still, do not let us be too gloomy. If we can keep the world from actual war, and I trust railroads, steamboats, cheap postage and our own example in Free Trade will do that, a great impulse will from this time be given to social reforms. The public mind is in a practical mood, and it will now precipitate itself upon Education, Temperance, reform of Criminals, care of Physical Health, etcetera, with greater zeal than ever. . . . .

"Now, my dear friend, for a word or two upon a very delicate personal matter. You have seen the account of an ebullition of a pecuniary kind which is taking place in the country, a demonstration in favour of me exclusively to the

1846. neglect of others who have laboured long and zealously with
ÆT. 42. me in the cause of Free Trade. I feel deeply the injustice of passing over Bright and Villiers, to say nothing of others; and nothing but the conviction that I am guiltless of ever having arrogated to myself the merit of others consoles me in the painful position in which the public have placed me, of being the vehicle for diverting the reward from men who are as worthy of all honour as myself. But I wish to speak to you upon a still more delicate view of this unpalatable affair. I do not like to be recompensed for a public service at all, and I am sensible that my moral influence will be impaired by the fact of my receiving a tribute in money from the public. I should have preferred to have either refused it, or to have done a glorious service by endowing a college. But as an honest man, and as a father and a husband, I cannot refuse to accept the money. You will probably be surprised when I tell you that I have shared the fate of nearly all leaders in revolutions or great reforms, by the complete sacrifice of my private prospects in life. In a word I was a poor man at the close of my agitation. I shall not go into details, because it would involve painful reminiscences; but suffice it to say that whilst the Duke of Richmond was taunting me with the profits of my business, I was suffering the complete loss of my private fortune, and I am not now afraid to confess to you that my health of body and peace of mind have suffered more in consequence of private anxieties during the last two years, than from my public labours. With strong domestic feelings and with an orderly mind, which was peculiarly sensitive to the immorality of risking the happiness of those whom nature had given the first claim on me, for the sake of a public object, I experienced a conflict between the demands of my responsible public station, and the prior duties which I owed to my family, which altogether nearly paralysed me. I should

have retired from public life last August, had not some of my wealthy coadjutors in Lancashire forced me to continue at my post, and had they not compelled me to leave to them the cares of my private business. It is owing to the knowledge which my neighbours in Lancashire have of the sacrifices which I have incurred, that the subscription has been entered into; and I wish you to be in possession of the facts, because you are the man of all others whom I should wish to possess the materials for forming a correct knowledge of the motives which compel me to take a course that jars at first sight on our notion of purity and disinterestedness."[1]

It is not necessary to enter into a discussion of the propriety of Cobden's acceptance of the large sum of money, between seventy-five and eighty thousand pounds, which were collected in commemoration of his services to what the subscribers counted a great public cause. The chief Leaguers anxiously discussed the project of a joint testimonial to Cobden, Mr. Bright, and Mr. Villiers, all three to be included in a common subscription.[2] But nobody could say how the fund was to be divided. It was then discussed whether as much money could be collected for the three as for Cobden individually, and it was agreed that it could not, for it was Cobden who united the sections of the Free Trade party. He had undoubtedly sacrificed good chances of private prosperity for the interest of the community, and it would have been a painful and discreditable satire on human nature if he had been left in ruin, while everybody around him was thriving on the results of his unselfish devotion. It is true that many others had made sacrifices both of time and money, but they had not sacrificed

[1] *To Geo. Combe.* July 14, 1846.

[2] The League had already voted a present of ten thousand pounds to Mr. George Wilson, their indefatigable chairman.

1846. everything as Cobden had done. The munificence of the
ÆT. 42. subscription was singularly honourable to those who contributed to it. No generous or reasonable man will think that it impairs by one jot the purity of the motives that prompted the exertions of the public benefactor whose great services it commemorated and rewarded.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TOUR OVER EUROPE.

ACCOMPANIED by his wife, Cobden landed at Dieppe on the 5th of August, 1846. He arrived in the Thames on his return on the 11th of October, 1847. He was absent, therefore, from England for fourteen months, and in the interval he had travelled in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Russia. His reception was everywhere that of a great discoverer in a science which interests the bulk of mankind much more keenly than any other, the science of wealth. He had persuaded the richest country in the world to revolutionize its commercial policy. People looked on him as a man who had found out a momentous secret. In nearly every important town that he visited in every great country in Europe, they celebrated his visit by a banquet, toasts, and congratulatory speeches. He had interviews with the Pope, with three or four kings, with ambassadors, and with all the prominent statesmen. He never lost an opportunity of speaking a word in season. Even from the Pope he entreated that His Holiness's influence might be used against bull-fighting in Spain. They were not all converted, but they all listened to him, and they all taught him something, whether they chose to learn anything from him in return or not.

The travellers passed rather more than eleven weeks in Spain, and at the beginning of the new year found themselves

1846. in Italy. Here they remained from January until the end of
ÆT. 42. June. From Venice they went north to the Austrian capital, and thence to Berlin. In the first week in August Mrs. Cobden started for England, while her husband turned his face eastwards. In Russia he passed five weeks, and three weeks more were usefully spent in the journey home by way of Lubeck and Hamburg.

When he returned to England he had such a conspectus and cosmorama of Europe in his mind as was possessed by no statesman in the country; of the great economic currents, of the special commercial interests, of the conflicting political issues, of the leading personages. Unless knowledge of such things is a superfluity for statesmen whose strong point is asserted to be foreign policy, Cobden was more fit to discuss the foreign policy of this country than any man in it. In less than a year after his return, Europe was shaken by a tremendous convulsion. The kings whom he had seen were forced from their thrones, and the greatest of the statesmen of the old world fled out in haste from Vienna. Neither they nor Cobden foresaw the storm that was so close upon them; but Cobden at least was aware of those movements in Paris which were silently unchaining the revolutionary forces. The following passage is from a letter written ten years later, but this is a proper place for it:—

"When I was in Paris in 1846, I saw Guizot, and though I had weighed him accurately as a politician, I pronounced him an intellectual pedant and a moral prude, with no more knowledge of men and things than is possessed by professors who live among their pupils, and he seemed to me to have become completely absorbed in the hard and unscrupulous will of Louis Philippe. At that time I was the hero of a successful agitation, and was taken into the confidence of all the leaders of the opposition who were getting up the movement which led first to the banquets, and next to the

revolution. I was at Odillon Barrot's, and at Girardin's, and met in private conclave Beaumont, Tocqueville, Duvergier de Hauranne, Léon Faucher, Bastiat, and others. I was of course a good deal consulted as to the way of managing such things, and am afraid I must plead guilty to having been an accessory before the fact to much that was afterwards done with so little immediate advantage to those concerned. I remember in particular telling Odillon Barrot, in all sincerity, that he would have made a very successful agitator on an English platform. His bluff figure and vehement style of oratory would have almost made him another Bright. But to the point. I naturally made inquiries as to what amount of parliamentary reform they were aiming at, and to my surprise found that all they wanted was a small addition to the electoral list (not exceeding 200,000 voters), comprising 'les capacités,' the professions, and a certain small increase from a slightly reduced tax-paying franchise. Upon my expressing my amazement that they should go for such a small measure (which, to be sure, appeared insignificant to me, just fresh from the total repeal of the Corn Laws), they answered that it would satisfy them for the present; it would recognize the principle of progress; and they frankly confessed that the bulk of the people were not fit for the suffrage, and that there was no security for constitutional government excepting in a restricted electoral class. Well, when these moderate men afterwards brought forward their harmless scheme, Guizot mounted the rostrum, and flourished his rod, and in true pedagogical style told them they were naughty boys—that they wanted to have banquets, which were very wicked things, and he would not allow such doings, and so he put down Barrot, Tocqueville, Bastiat, and Co., and up rose Marrast, Ledru Rollin, and Co., to fill their places. The whole thing was the result of Guizot's pedantry and Louis Philippe's unbelief in

1846.

Æt. 42.

1846. human nature. I had a long evening's talk with the latter
ÆT. 42. at the Chateau d'Eu at the same time, and nothing so much struck me as his contempt for the people through whom and for whom he professed to rule. There is not the slightest possible doubt (no Englishman but myself has so good a ground for offering an opinion, for no other was in the secrets of the French reformers) that if Louis Philippe had allowed an addition of 200,000 voters to the 250,000 already on the electoral list, he would have renewed the lease of the Orleanist throne for twenty years, and in all probability have secured for the French people the permanent advantages of a constitutional government."[1]

As it happened, Cobden arrived in Spain at the moment of the once famous marriages of the young Queen and her sister, the one to her cousin, Don Francisco, the other to the Duke of Montpensier. The Minister sent Cobden and his party tickets for the ceremony, and they found themselves placed close to the great personages of the day. They went to a bull-fight, with the emotions that the scene usually stirs in all save Spanish breasts, and Cobden's disgust was particularly aroused by the presence of the Spanish Primate at the brutal festival.[2] Alexander Dumas, who had come to Madrid to write an account of the Duke of Montpensier's marriage, went with Cobden over the Museum and the Escurial. At Seville Cobden had such a reception that the newspapers assured their readers that Christopher Columbus himself could hardly have been more enthusiastically applauded, or more highly honoured for the new world which he had presented to Castille.

Everywhere men were delighted by his tact and address. He made as captivating points in a speech to the traders of

[1] *To J. Parkes*, Dec. 28, 1856.

[2] Richard Cobden, "Notes sur ses Voyages," etc. Par Mdme. Salis Schwabe. Paris: Guillaumin, 1879.

Cadiz, the farmers of Perugia, or the great nobles in Rome, 1846.
as when, from a waggon, he had addressed the rustics of a ÆT. 42.
village in the West of England. At Milan he charmed them by mentioning that if they went into a London merchant's office they would find the accounts kept on a method which came from Italy; and that the great centre of our financial system was in a street that was still named from the Lombard bankers. At Florence he warmed the hearts of those who listened to him by saying that he had come to Tuscany with the feelings of a believer visiting the shrines of his faith. The Dutch and the Swiss owed to their geographical situation a partial escape from the protective system; but to Tuscany belonged the glory of preceding the rest of the world by half a century in applying economic theories to legislation. Let them render solemn homage, he cried with an outburst of true eloquence, to the memory of the great men who had taught the world this great lesson; all honour to Bandini, who a century before had perceived the truth that Free Trade is the only sure instrument of prosperity; undying honour to Leopoldi, who, seizing the lamp of science from the hands of Bandini, entered boldly into the ways of Free Trade, then obscure and unknown, without flinching before the obstacles that ignorance, prejudice, and selfishness had strewn in the path; honour to Neri, to Giovanni Febbroni, to Fossombroni; to all those statesmen, in a word, who had preserved down to our own days the great work which they had set on foot.

Mrs. Cobden said that it was fortunate that her husband had not too high an opinion of himself, or else the Italians would have turned his head, so many attentions, both public and private, were showered upon him. Even at a tranquil little town like Perugia a troop of musicians sallied out to serenade him at his hotel, the Agricultural Society sent a silver medal and a diploma, and in the evening at the Casino

1846. the concert was closed by the recitation of verses in honour
Æт. 42. of Richard Cobden.

On their arrival at Genoa, on their return from all these honours (May 20), they found that O'Connell had died there the previous day. They at once proceeded to pay a visit to his son, and from O'Connell's servant, who had been with him for thirteen years, they heard the circumstances of the great patriot's end.[1]

Cobden's diaries of this long and instructive tour are so copious that they would more than fill one of these volumes. They afford a complete economic panorama of the countries which he visited, and abound in acute observations, and judicious hints of all kinds from the Free Trader's point of view. Their facts, however, are now out of date, and their interest is mostly historic. The reader will probably be satisfied with a moderate number of extracts, recording Cobden's interviews with important people, and his impressions of historic scenes.

Dieppe, Aug. 6th, 1846.—"Called and left my card with the King's aide-de-camp, at the chateau. The King was out in the forest for a drive; on his return received an invitation to call at the chateau at eight o'clock. We found thirty or forty persons in the saloon, the King, Queen, and Madame Adelaide, the King's sister, in the middle of the room. Louis Philippe was very civil and very communicative, talked much against war, and ridiculed the idea of an acquisition of more territory, saying, 'What would be the use of our taking Charleville, or Philippeville? Why, it would give us a dozen more bad deputies, that's all!' Said the people would not now tolerate war, and much in that strain. He

[1] The common report that O'Connell intended to quit England and close his days at Rome was untrue: on the contrary, his own inclination was to stay at Derrynane, and the journey to Italy was only undertaken at the urgent solicitation of his friends. He was conscious up to the moment of his death.

alluded to the League and my labours, but I could not bring him to the subject of Free Trade as affecting his own country's interests. He spoke of the iron monopoly of France as being, if possible, worse than our corn monopoly. He and the Queen spoke in high terms of the kindness of the English people towards them. After this short interview I came away with the impression that the King did not like the close discussion of the Free Trade question, but that he preferred dwelling on generalities. I formed the opinion that he is a clever *actor*, and perhaps that is all we can say of the ablest sovereigns of this or any other country.

"He was not very complimentary to Lord Palmerston, applying to him a French maxim, which may be turned into the English version, 'If you bray a fool in a mortar, he will remain a fool still.' He repeated two or three times that he wished there were no custom-houses, but 'how is revenue to be raised?' He quoted a conversation with Washington, in which the latter had deplored the necessity of raising the whole of the American revenue from customs' duties. I had heard in England, before starting, that Louis Philippe was himself deeply interested in the preservation of monopoly; and that his large property in forests would be diminished in value by the free importation of coals and iron. But I will not hastily prejudge his Majesty so far as to believe, without better proofs, that he is actuated by a personal interest in secretly opposing the progress of Free Trade principles. It is difficult, however, to conceive that a man of his sagacity and knowledge can be blind to the importance of these principles in consolidating the peace of empires."

"*Paris, August* 10*th*.—Early in the morning a call from Domville, my old French master; engaged him to give me an hour's instruction every morning during my stay in

1846. Paris.[4] Afterwards Horace Say called, a noble-looking man
Ær. 42. —a rare phrenological and physiognomical development."

"*August 15th, Saturday.*—French lesson. Went with Léon Faucher to call upon M. Thiers; walked and gossiped in his garden, and talked without reserve upon Free Trade. I warned him not to pronounce an opinion against us, thus to fall into the same predicament as Peel did. He seems never to have thought upon the subject, but promises fairly. A lively little man without dignity, and with nothing to impress you with a sense of power."

"*Barcelona, December 8th.*—Reached Barcelona at half-past five o'clock; as it was half-an-hour after sunset, the health officers did not visit us, and we were shut up in our floating prison till the following morning. This system of requiring pratique at every port for vessels in the coasting-trade is most useless and vexatious, and would be submitted to by none but Spaniards. They shrug their shoulders like Turks, and say, 'It was always so.' The waiter on the steamer told us that the best part of the profits of his situation came from smuggling, and that the smuggling was all done through the connivance of the government employés; he stated that the contraband goods conveyed by him were generally carried on shore by the custom-house officers themselves. This agrees with all that I heard from the consuls and merchants on the Mediterranean coast. The French consul at Carthagena remarked whilst speaking of the universal corruption of the custom-house officers, 'With money you might pass the tower of Notre Dame through the custom-house without observation, but without money you could not pass *this*,' holding up his pocket handkerchief."

[4] By his diligent use of this opportunity Cobden succeeded in acquiring a really good command over the French language for colloquial and other purposes.

"*Perpignan, December* 14*th and* 15*th.*—Luxuriated in the comforts of a French inn. I felt almost ready to hug the furniture, kiss the white table-cloth, and shake hands with the waiters, so attractive did they all look after my Spanish discomforts! Sat indoors and wrote letters. Walked once only into the town, an irregular, confined, and ugly fortified place. The only annoyance I experienced was from the military music and the parading and drilling of the troops." 1846. ÆT. 42.

"*Narbonne, December* 16*th.*—Left Perpignan this morning at eleven o'clock. The road to Narbonne passed along the marshy shores of the Mediterranean; very uninteresting scenery. But the sensation of passing along a French road in an English carriage was quite delightful after the Spanish travelling. The men wearing the blue blouse. What a contrast in the appearance of the two peoples! On one side the mountain, the grave, sombre, dignified, dark Spaniard; here the lively, supple, facetious, amiable Frenchman, who seems ready to adapt himself to any mood to please you."

"*Montpellier, December* 17*th.*—Separated from our travelling companions[a] this morning at Narbonne; they started at eight o'clock for Toulouse, and we at the same hour for Montpellier. Our road lay along a rich and populous but uninteresting country, through Beziers, and for some distance close to the Mediterranean. The people were busy in the fields, cutting off the long dry shoots of the vines with a pair of pruning shears, and leaving nothing but the stumps. When within ten miles of Montpellier, snow began to fall, and it continued during the rest of the journey."

"*Nice, Jan.* 3*rd,* 1847.—Sir George Napier called; lost his left arm at Ciudad Rodrigo; is younger brother of the

[a] Mr. and Mrs. Schwabe.

1847. conqueror of Scinde, brother of the historian of the Peninsular war, and of the commodore. Told me some anecdotes of the wars with the Caffirs at the Cape of Good Hope, where he was governor seven years. Says the Hottentots make good soldiers when officered by English; described a regiment of them (dragoons), commanded by his son; very small men, but superior to the Caffirs or Dutch Boers; that they required restraining, so daring their courage, etc. This confirms my opinion that all races of men are equal in valour when placed under like circumstances."

ÆT. 43.

"*Nice, Jan. 4th.*—Saw a large number of men assembled in the open place; peasants chiefly, conscripts for the army; went amongst them, a sturdy-looking set, and apparently not dissatisfied with their fate; am told they are generally only liable to serve for fourteen months. Called on M. Lacroix, the Consul, who said the government of Sardinia has a monopoly of salt, gunpowder, and tobacco; that the province or county of Nice is not included in the general customs-law of the kingdom, but has its own privileges; that corn from foreign countries pays a duty, but that all other articles, excepting those monopolized by government, are imported free. Called upon an old Frenchman, named Sergent, in his ninety-seventh year, who acted a prominent part in the scenes of the first revolution, and is one of the few men living who signed or voted for the execution of the king; was originally an engraver, and there were several of his productions on the walls of his room, but nothing commemorative of Napoleon's exploits.*

"*Nice, Jan. 5th.*—Dined with Mr. Davenport, and met M. Sergent. Took tea with Sir George Napier and Lady N.;

* Sergent is commonly credited with a leading share in the organization and direction of the September Massacres in 1792; on the other hand he is supposed to have saved several victims from the guillotine. Louis Philippe, who had been his colleague in the Jacobin Club, gave him a pension of 1800 francs.

met M. Gastand, a merchant of the town, who told me that woollens are imported from France into Nice, and again smuggled into that country, the drawback of twenty per cent. allowed in France upon the exportation affording a profit on this singular traffic; says that the refined sugar exported from Marseilles receives a drawback of six per cent., and that this sugar is sold cheaper in Nice than in France."

"*Genoa, Jan.* 13*th.*—This morning the Marquis d'Azeglio called, with Mr. William Gibbs—the former a Piedmontese who has written poetry, romances, and political works, and is also an artist. He told me he had been expelled from Rome by the late Pope, and from Lombardy and Florence, in consequence of his writings. An amiable and intelligent man, evincing rational views upon the moral progress of his country, and deprecating revolutionary violence as inimical to the advance of liberal principles.

"*Genoa, Jan.* 16*th.*—Called on Dr. —— and Mr. Brown (Consul); the latter showed me a copy of Junius, with numerous notes in pencil by Horne Tooke on the margin; described the demagogue, whom he knew personally, as a finished scoundrel. In the evening dined with a party of about fifty persons, Marquis d'Azeglio president. The consuls of France, Spain, Belgium, and Tuscany present, as well as several of the Genoese nobles, and merchants of different countries. French was universally spoken. My speech was intended for the ministers at Turin rather than my hearers. In this country, where there is no representative system, public opinion has no direct mode of influencing the policy of the state, and therefore I used such arguments as were calculated to have weight with the government, and induce them to favour Free Trade as a means of increasing the national revenue."

"*Genoa, Jan.* 17*th.*—In the evening M. Papa called and

1847. Æt. 43. remained for a long talk about the affairs of the country. The law for the division of the landed property on the death of proprietors is nearly the same here as in France, it being shared equally by the children. An entail can be settled upon the eldest son only with the consent of the king, and it is not willingly granted. The nobles or patricians of Genoa are all Marquises, they having derived the title from Charles the Fifth of Spain. The present representatives of these old families have generally much degenerated from their energetic and public-spirited ancestors.

"*Genoa, Jan.* 18*th.*—In the evening I visited the governor (Marchese Paulucci) at his reception. A large party filled his rooms, some dancing; a large majority of the men, officers in the army. The governor thanked me for the tone in which I had spoken at the public dinner given to me on Saturday; said that he had naturally felt a little anxious to know how the proceedings had been conducted, and complimented me upon my tact, etc.[7] In speaking about the power of Russia to make an irruption into Europe, I expressed an opinion that she had not the money to march 40,000 soldiers out of her territory; he agreed with me, and mentioned an anecdote in confirmation. He said that when he was military governor of a district in the Caucasus, he was applied to for a plan of operations for the invasion of Persia; that, when he handed in to the Minister his estimate of the number of troops to be set in

[7] "Although disposed to be grateful for their public banquets of which I have had upwards of a dozen in Italy, besides private parties without number, yet I can see other motives besides compliments to me in their meetings. In the first place the old spirit of rivalry has been at work amongst the different towns. But secondly, the Italian Liberals have seized upon my presence as an excuse for holding a meeting on a public question, to make speeches and offer toasts, *often for the first time.* They consider this a step gained, and so it is. And I have been sometimes surprised that the government have allowed it. In Austrian Italy such demonstrations are quite unprecedented."—*Cobden to George Combe*, June, 1847.

motion, the latter was so surprised at the smallness of the force that he declared it was not worthy of the occasion, and that he could not present it to the emperor. 'But how will you transport a greater number of men to the scene of operations if I add them to my estimate?' said the general. 'Oh! we must build boats and construct waggons was the reply.' 'Where is the money to come from?' was the rejoinder. At last the plan was laid before the emperor, who saw the difficulty and confirmed the view of the general."

"*Rome, Jan. 22nd.*—In Tuscany no corn law of any kind has been allowed to exist by the present dynasty for many generations. Mr. Lloyd told me an anecdote of one of the leaders of the revolutionary party of 1831, who, when asked by him what practical reforms he wished to carry by a change in the government, remarked that one of the grievances he wished to remedy was the want of adequate protection for the land. So that had this patriot been able to induce the people to upset the Grand Duke's authority, he would have rewarded them with a Corn Law! Was told that the grass of which the far-famed Leghorn bonnets are made, can only be grown in perfection in Tuscany, that it has been sown elsewhere, but without success, and that the seed from which it is grown is the produce of a few fields only; inquire further on my return about this. Left Leghorn at six o'clock for Civita Vecchia, and arrived there at eight the following morning. . . . Left at half-past twelve for Rome, the road lying along the beach for several miles. Almost immediately on quitting the town the country assumed the character of a wild common, covered with shrubs and tufts of long grass, and this neglected appearance of the soil continued with slight interruptions of cultivated patches as long as daylight lasted. Noticed the fine bullocks of a light grey colour, with dark shoulders, and having very long branching horns, noble-

1847. looking animals. It was an indistinct moonlight as we came
ÆT. 43. near Rome. . . . On turning a corner of the road we came suddenly upon a full and close view of the dome of St. Peter's which stood out boldly in the evening sky."

"*Rome, Jan.* 23*rd.*—The effect of the colonnade is much impaired by the high square buildings of the Vatican, which rise high above on the right, and detract even from the appearance of the great façade. On the first sight of the interior, I was not struck so much with its grandeur or sublimity, as with the beauty and richness of its details. I felt impressed with more solemnity in entering York Minster for the first time than in St. Peter's. The glare and glitter of so much gold and such varieties of marble distract the eye, and prevent it taking in the whole form of the building in one *coup-d'œil*, as we do in the simple stone of our unadorned Gothic Cathedrals. I was disappointed too in the statues, many of which are poor things."

"*Rome, Jan.* 25*th.*— . . . . Then to the Vatican, and passed a couple of hours in walking leisurely through the numerous galleries of sculpture where the enthusiastic admirer of the art may revel to intoxication amidst the most perfect forms; here I was more than satisfied. I had not pictured to myself anything so extensive or varied. Not only is the human figure of both sexes and all ages in every possible graceful attitude transferred to marble, which all but breathes and moves, but there are perfect models of animals too, and all arranged with consummate taste and skill in rooms that are worthy of enshrining such treasures. The Laocoon to my eye is the masterpiece. The Apollo Belvidere is perfect in anatomy, but the features express no feeling. Saw Raphael's masterpiece; the drawing faultless, but the subjects were unhappily dictated by monkish patrons, and they confined the artist too much to the expression of a very limited range of sentiments, as veneration, etc."

"*Feb.* 8*th.*—In the evening to a ball at the French Embassy, in the Colonna Palace—a magnificent suite of rooms, filled with Italians, French, and English. Saw Count Rossi for the first time (the Ambassador), a sharp-faced, intellectual-looking man; I suspect he is more of the diplomatist than the political economist, and more of a politician than a Free Trader. Met the young Prince Broglie, an intelligent youth; was introduced to Antonelli, the Finance Minister; and had a long conversation with Grassellini, the Governor of Rome, urging him to signalize his reign over the city by lighting it with gas, and laying down foot pavements. Left at twelve o'clock."

"*Feb.* 10*th.*—I was entertained at a public dinner in the hall of the Chamber of Commerce; about thirty-five persons present, Marquis Potenziani in the chair; Prince Corsini, very aged, Prince Canino (Bonaparte), Duke of Bracciano (Torlonia), Marquis Dragonetti, etc., amongst the guests. The healths of the Pope and the Queen of England drank together as one toast! I spoke in English, about a dozen of the company appearing to understand me. Doctor Pantaleone then read an Italian translation of my speech, which was well received and elicited cheers for the translator from those who had understood the English. A Doctor Masi, a celebrated improvisatore, delivered an improvisation in the course of the evening upon myself; his look and gestures were strikingly eloquent, even to one who could not understand his language. There was a wild expression of inspiration in his countenance which realized the idea of a poet's fine frenzy, and the effect was heightened by his long black hair, which streamed from a high pale brow down upon his shoulders. His emotions imparted to the audience an electrical effect, which now roused them to immoderate excitement and next melted them to tears. One of his verses produced an unanimous call for an encore; he paused

1847. for a moment, drew his fingers through his hair, then tried
ÆT. 43. to reproduce the verse, but there came forth another cast of rhymes. His last verse, which drew tears from those around, was translated to me, and conveyed this sentiment: 'When you go back to England, say you found Italy a corpse, but upon it was planted a green branch, which will one day flower again and bring forth fruit.' The dinner went off with great spirit, and, remembering that we were sitting so near the walls of the Vatican, I thought it the most cheering proof of the wide-spread sympathy for Free Trade principles that I had seen in the course of all my travels."

"*February* 11*th*.—Called on Prince Corsini, Colonel Caldwell, Lord Ossulston, then to the Corso again, to join in the fun of the Carnival, streets more crowded than ever with carriages and masquers, the English everywhere and always the most uproarious. If there be any excess of boisterousness visible, it is ten to one that it proceeds from the English or other foreigners. The Italians do little more than exchange bouquets or little bonbons in a very quiet, graceful way, throwing them to each other from their carriages or balconies, but the English shovel upon each other the chalk *confettis*, with all the zeal and energy of navigators. It is quite certain that a carnival in England would not pass over so peaceably as here; people would begin with sugar-plums, and go on to apples and oranges, then proceed to potatoes, and end probably with stones."

"*Rome, February* 12*th*.—Called on Mr. Hemans, son of the poetess, who is editing the *Roman Advertiser*, an English weekly paper, and gave him a copy of my speech. Then accompanied Prince Canino in an open carriage to see the foxhounds throw off in the Campagna, beyond the tomb of Cæcilia Metella; the hounds drew the ruins of aqueducts and tombs, under the direction of 'Dick' and 'George,' the whippers-in, in regular Melton style, but not finding,

they proceeded across the Campagna to a wood at a distance. 1847.
The prince followed the field in his drag, leaving the road, ÆT. 43.
and going across the country, just as we should have done in an American prairie. We soon found ourselves upon a trackless waste, with no other habitations than here and there a wigwam, for the temporary accommodation of the shepherds during the winter months, the only part of the year when man or beast can exist in this region. The Marquis d'Azeglio called on me on his arrival from Genoa. We had a long chat upon the prospects of Italy; his political views appear to me sound and rational, and he is evidently under the influence of patriotic feelings. There is always hope for a country that produces such men.

"In the evening to the American Consul's, and found a number of his countrymen and women in masquerade dresses, everything about them lively excepting the spirits of the actors. Introduced to several of 'our most distinguished citizens,'—a title for a bore."

"*February* 13*th*.—Dined with Mr. and Mrs. S. Gurney, met young Bunsens, and some other Germans, the Prussian Minister, etc. Speaking to the latter about his being almost the only Protestant representative at the court of the Pope, he said that Peel had applied to the Prussian Government to know whether it found it advantageous or otherwise to have a diplomatic connexion with the Holy See, and that the answer given was, that the disadvantages rather predominated, and that if that Government stood in the position of England, it would prefer to remain without diplomatic relations with Rome. Next to Prince Canino's soirée, very mixed, but very agreeable, and many intelligent men there. Was introduced to the Count of Syracuse, brother of the King of Naples, with whom I had a long talk about Ireland, France, and other matters. Found him, for a king's brother, a very clear-headed, well-informed man. Talked with the Sar-

1847. dinian Minister about Turkey, where he had been ambassador
Æt. 43. for eight years. The Marquis Dragonetti, an able man. Was introduced to several others of note."

"*February* 14*th*.—They who argue that the working people are elevated in intellect and prompted to habits of cleanliness and self-respect by having free access to public buildings devoted to the arts, must not quote the ragged, dirty crowds who frequent St. Peter's to kiss the toe of the statue of the saint!"

"*Feb.* 16*th*.—The statue of Moses by Michael Angelo in the Church of San Pietro in Vincoli, did not impress me on looking at it as I expected. The execution may be all that the sculptor desires, but to my eye the face wants both dignity and honesty of expression, and the head fails to impress me with the idea of wisdom or capacity in the great law-giver."

"*Feb.* 19*th*.—To the Barberini Palace to see a very small collection of paintings, one of them the far-famed Beatrice Cenci by Guido. The touching pensiveness of the face produces such an impression that it will be present in one's recollection when perhaps every other picture in Rome is forgotten.

"In the evening took tea with Mrs. Jameson, authoress of works on early painters, an agreeable woman, whose good-nature and sense prevent her from displaying the unpleasant qualities of too many literary ladies. Met Mr. Gibson the sculptor, who talked about robbers and assassins, with a graphic description of them and their victims, which was quite professional."

"*Feb.* 22*nd*.—Went with Mrs. Jameson to the Vatican, walked through the sculpture galleries. The Braccio Nuovo contains a statue of Demosthenes in an attitude most earnest; there is no appearance of effort or art in the figure, and yet it is endowed with the earnest and sincere

expression which an actor would seek to imitate. The countenance expresses a total forgetfulness of self and everything but the subject on which the mind of the orator is intent. The sculptor has not only succeeded in making his marble convey the idea of sincerity, but it almost makes you think it *feels* sincere. The whole art of the work lies in this impress of earnestness, and it proves that the artist knew where the secret of oratory lies, and I can fancy that Demosthenes himself might have been the instructor of the sculptor on this point. The full-length statue of the Roman lady in the same gallery is dignified, chaste, and graceful.

"Walked with Mrs. Jameson into the Sistine Chapel, to see Michael Angelo's frescoes; the Last Judgment at one end, and the whole of the ceiling from his pencil. It is a deplorable misapplication of the time and talent of a man of genius to devote years to the painting of the ceiling of a chapel, at which one can only look by an effort that costs too much inconvenience to the neck to leave the mind at ease to enjoy the pleasure of the painting. . . . With all the enthusiasm of my fair companion, I could not feel much gratification at this celebrated work of art.

"At seven o'clock was presented to the Pope in his private cabinet, where I found him in a white flannel friar's dress, sitting at a small writing-desk surrounded with papers. The approach to this little room was through several lofty and spacious apartments. The curtained doors and the long flowing robes of the attendants reminded me, oddly enough, of my interview with Mehemet Ali at Cairo. Pius IX. received me with a hearty and unaffected expression of pleasure at meeting one who had been concerned in a great and good work in England; commended my perseverance and the means by which the principle of Free Trade had been made to triumph; and he remarked that England was the only country where such triumphs were achieved by

1847. years of legal and moral exertion. He professed himself
ÆT. 43. to be favourable to Free Trade, and said all he could do should be done to forward it, but modestly added that he could do but little. I pointed to Tuscany, his next neighbour, as a good example to follow, and said that England had not been ashamed to take a lesson from that country; and I added that Tuscany was an inconvenient neighbour, owing to the smuggling which would be carried on until his tariff was put upon the same moderate scale. He spoke of the wide frontier of his territories as being favourable to the contraband trade, and alluded to the desirableness of a custom-house union in Italy. In parting, I called his attention to the practice in Spain of having bull-fights in honour of the saints and virgins on the fête days, and gave him an extract from a Madrid paper, giving an account of a bull-fight there in honour of its patroness the Virgin. After a little conversation upon the cruelty and demoralization of these spectacles, he thanked me for having drawn his attention to it, and promised to give instructions upon the subject to an envoy whom he was about to send to Spain. He concluded by another complimentary phrase or two, and we left. I was impressed with the notion that he is sincere, kind-hearted, and good, and that he is possessed of strong common sense and sound understanding. He did not strike me as a man of commanding genius."

"*Feb.* 23*rd.*—Dined with Count Rossi, the French Ambassador. A splendid banquet, at which the foreign ambassadors in Rome, including the Turkish envoy going to Vienna, were present. Looking round the table I saw represented, Italy, France, Germany, Russia, England, Turkey, and Syria, the latter by a bishop of the Maronites."

"*Feb.* 24*th.*—We have been in Rome a month, have seen some of the wonders of the ancients, and have been overwhelmed with the kindness of friends, but I long for a quiet

day or two in travelling over the Campagna, where the 1847.
sheep will be the only living objects that will surround us. Æt. 43.
I came here expecting repose, and have found excitement, crowded evening parties, and late hours. At eleven o'clock at night Doctor Masi called again, bringing me sundry packets of his newspaper, the *Contemporaneo*, which he desires to transmit by me to Naples, thus making me a kind of moral smuggler."

"*Naples, Feb. 27th.*—Left Rome Thursday morning, 25th February, at half-past eight, for Naples, by the new Appian Way, which leaves the old road of that name a little to the right on quitting the city, but falls into it a few miles off. The course of this celebrated old road may be distinctly traced at a distance by the mounds and ruins of tombs and temples with which its sides are fringed. Snow fell as we passed out of Rome. The view of the Campagna, with the ruined aqueducts stretching across its desolate surface, presented a striking contrast to the luxurious and busy scene which we had but a few minutes before taken leave of within the city walls. These stately and graceful aqueducts are nearly the only ruins which excite feelings of regret, being perhaps the sole buildings which did not merit destruction by the crimes, the folly, and the injustice which attended their construction, or the purposes to which they were devoted.

"We are now in the territory of the King of the Two Sicilies, who can certainly boast of ruling over more beggars than any other sovereign. Mendicancy seems to be the profession of all the labouring people whenever they have an opportunity of practising it. No sooner is a traveller's carriage seen than young and old pounce upon it; the peasant woman throws down her load that she may keep up with the vehicle, bawling out incessantly for charity; the boy who is watching the sheep, a field or two off, hurries

1847. across hedge and ditch to intercept you as you go up the
ÆT. 43. hill; and when the carriage stops to change horses, it is surrounded by lame, halt, and blind, scrambling and screaming for alms. The rags and misery remind me of Ireland. The only persons I see in the small towns and villages with clean, sleek skins and good clothes on their backs are priests and soldiers."

"*March 4th.*—Went with M. D'Azala to the Museum, first to see the room containing jewellery and ornaments, but did not think them generally in such good taste or so well executed as those I had seen in Campana's collection of Etruscan works of a similar kind in Rome. Next to the rooms containing the articles in bronze, brought principally from Pompeii. Here I found specimens of all the common household utensils—lamps, jugs, pans, moulds for pastry, some of them in the form of shells, others of animals; scales and steelyards, mirrors, bells, articles for the toilet, including rouge; bread in loaves, with the name of the maker stamped on them, surgical instruments, cupping cups in bronze, locks, keys, hinges, tickets for the theatre; in fact, I was introduced to the mode of domestic every-day life amongst the ancients. . . . . After seeing this portion of the Museum I came away without proceeding farther, preferring to mix up no other objects with my enjoyment to-day of certainly the most novel and interesting collection of curiosities I ever beheld."

"*Naples, March 6th.*—At eleven o'clock went with Mr. Close to the palace to see the King by appointment; conversed for a short time with him upon Free Trade, about which he did not appear to be altogether ignorant or without some favourable sympathies. He questioned me about the future solution of the Irish difficulty, a question which seems to be uppermost in the minds of all statesmen and public men on the continent. The King is a stout and tall man,

heavy looking, and of restricted capacity. I am told he is amiable and correct in his domestic life, excessively devout and entirely in the hands of his confessor, of whom report does not speak favourably." 1847. ÆT. 43.

"*March* 16*th*.—I went to the Museum to see the collection of bronzes again whilst the houses from which they were taken in Pompeii were fresh in my memory. I was introduced to the members of the Academy of Science, who were holding an ordinary meeting in their room in the same building. A complimentary address to me was delivered by Sig. Mancini, and responded to by other members, and I thanked them briefly in French."

"*Turin, May* 26*th*, 1847.—Had an interview with his Majesty Charles Albert, a very tall and dignified figure, with a sombre, but not unamiable expression of countenance; received me frankly; talked of railroads, machinery, agriculture, and similar practical questions. Said he hoped I was contented with what his Government had done in the application of my principles, and informed me that his ministry had resolved upon a further reduction of duties on iron, cotton, etc. He is said to have good intentions, but to want firmness of character.

"In the evening, Count Revel, minister of finance, came in, with whom I had a long discussion upon Free Trade, a sensible man. Speaking to Signor Cibrario upon the subject of the commerce of the middle ages in Italy, he said that the principle of protection or Colbertism was unknown; that, however, there were innumerable impediments to industry and internal commerce, owing to the corporations of trades and the custom-houses which surrounded every little state and almost every little city."

"*May* 28*th*, 1847.—Went at eight o'clock in the morning to hear a lecture by Signor Scialoja, Professor of Political Economy at the University, a Neapolitan of considerable

1847. Ær. 43. talent, who delivered his address with much eloquence, extempore with the aid of notes. In the course of his lecture he alluded in flattering terms to my presence, which elicited applause from a crowded auditory, comprising, in addition to the students, numerous visitors, officers in the army, clergymen, advocates, etc. On my leaving the hall at the close I was cheered by a crowd of students in the Court. Count Petitti, and Count Cavour took breakfast with me."

"*Milan, June 3rd.*—Attended a meeting of La Societa d'Incoraggiamento of Milan. About 200 persons were present, consisting of members and their friends. A paper was read by Signor G. Sacchi upon the doctrine of Romagnosi (a Milanese writer) on free trade, in which he alluded in complimentary terms to my presence. Then Signor A. Mauri (the secretary) read an eulogistic address to me. After which Chevalier Maffei read a paper upon Milton, with a long translation from the first book of 'Paradise Lost.' In conclusion I delivered a short address in French, thanking the Society and recommending the study of political economy to the young men present. The meeting terminated with enthusiastic expressions of satisfaction. In the evening was entertained at a public dinner (the first ever held in Milan) by about eighty persons, including most of the leading literary men of the place, Signor G. Basevi, advocate, in the chair. This gentleman, who I was told is of the Jewish persuasion, had the moral courage to act as counsel in defence of Hofer the Tyrolese leader, when he was tried by a military commission at Mantua and sentenced to be shot. Not having before taken part in a similar demonstration, he was unacquainted with the mode of conducting a meeting. He began the toasts in the midst of the dinner, by proposing my health in an eloquent speech. Then followed three or four others who all proposed my health.

Before the dinner was concluded, other orators, who had become a little heated with wine, wished to speak. One of them broke through the rule laid down, and almost entered upon the forbidden ground of Austrian politics. However, by dint of management and entreaty the excited spirits were calmed, and the banquet went off pretty well. Received an anonymous letter entreating me not to propose the health of the Emperor of Austria." 1847. Æt. 43.

"*Lake Como, June 7th.*—Lounged away the morning over Madame D'Arblay's Memoirs, and Lady C. Bury's George IV. Heard also some gossip about the residents on the shores of the lake, not the most favourable to their morality. After dinner made an excursion to the town of Como, and saw the Cathedral."

"*Desenzano, June 9th.*—Found Signor Salevi an intelligent and amiable man, his head and countenance striking; is writing a book upon prison reform, and a great promoter of infant schools, of which he says there are three well conducted in Brescia, and supported by voluntary contributions. Speaking about the proprietorship of land, which is in this neighbourhood very much divided, he expressed his surprise that England, so greatly in advance of Europe in other respects, should still preserve so much of the feudal system in respect to the law of real property. He thinks the law of succession, as established in the Code Napoleon, highly favourable to the mass of the people; that nothing gives dignity to a man, and developes his self-respect so effectually, as the ownership of property, however small. In Lombardy, as in Piedmont, one half the property is at the disposal of a father on his decease; the remainder is by law given equally amongst his children. I find everywhere on the continent, amongst all classes, the same unfavourable opinion of our law of primogeniture in England."

"*Venice, June 21st.*—In the evening dined at a public enter-

1847. tainment at the island of Giudecca, under an alcove of vines;
ÆT. 43. the party consisted of about seventy persons, Count Priuli in the chair, the podesta or mayor by his side, the French and American consuls being present. At the close of the sumptuous repast, the chairman called upon Dr. Locatelli to propose my health in behalf of the meeting, and he read a short and eloquent speech, to which I replied in French. It had been arranged that no other speeches should be made. M. Chalaye, a French gentleman who was in China representing the French Government during our late war there, and who is now appointed Consul to Peru, made a strong appeal privately to the chairman, to be allowed to make a speech, but without success. We left the table, and after taking coffee, the party entered their gondolas, which were waiting, and accompanied by the excellent band of music belonging to an Austrian regiment, which had played during the dinner, we proceeded in procession down the grand canal to the Rialto bridge. The music and the gay liveries of some of our boatmen soon attracted a great number of gondolas; the sound and sight also brought everybody into their balconies; as we returned, the moon, which had risen, gave a fresh charm to the picturesque scene, which was sufficiently romantic to excite poetical emotions even in the mind of a political economist."

"*Trieste, June 26th.*—Left Venice this morning at six o'clock in the Austrian Lloyd's steam-boat, a handsome, large, and clean vessel. It was low water, and as we came out of the port, through the tortuous channel which winds amongst the islands, it afforded a good view of the advantages which the Queen of the Adriatic possessed behind these intricate barriers. The view of the city at a few miles' distance, with its palaces, towers, and domes, rising from the level of the water, and its low country at the back shut in by high mountains, is very magnificent. Reached Trieste

at two o'clock. The coast hilly, and the town stands upon a confined spot shut in by the high land, which rises immediately at the back. The ships lie in an open roadstead, and are exposed to certain winds. The number of square-rigged vessels and the activity in the port offer a contrast to the scene at Venice."

"*Trieste, July 1st.*—Dined at a public dinner given to me by about ninety of the principal merchants in the saloon of the theatre. M. Schläpfer, president of the Exchange Committee, in the chair. The speeches were delivered in the midst of the dinner. M. De Bruck, the projector and chief director of Austrian Lloyd's spoke well. Signor Dell' Ongaro, who is an Italian and a poet, read a speech, in which he made allusion to Italian nationality, which drew forth some hasty remarks from M. De Bruck, and led to a scene of some excitement. After dinner I persuaded them to shake hands. In speaking to the chairman during the dinner, he described the iron-masters in Styria as not having in a series of years realized much money, notwithstanding their being protected by heavy duties. Many of the nobility are interested in these furnaces; their businesses badly managed. He gives a still worse description of the cotton-spinners and manufacturers, who cling to the ways of their fathers, and do not improve their machinery, being very inferior to the Swiss; does not know of an instance of one of them retiring from business with a fortune, and few of them are rich in floating capital. A good band of an Austrian regiment performed during the dinner."

"*Vienna, July 7th.*—Looked in to see the famous monumental tomb by Canova, an original and successful design. I think, however, this sculptor lived to enjoy the best of his fame, and that posterity will hardly preserve the warmth of enthusiasm for his genius that was felt by the generation in which he lived."

1847. ÆT. 43.

"*Vienna, July* 10*th*.—Paid a visit in company with M. de H. to Prince Metternich, whose appearance hardly denotes the veteran of seventy-five. His head and countenance convey the impression of high polish rather than native force of character, and his conversation is more subtle than profound. He talks incessantly, perhaps in order to choose his own topics; the state of Italy was his principal theme, and he professed to be apprehensive of violent disorders in that country. He entered into a long essay upon differences of race, and the antagonisms of nationality in Europe. 'Why did Italy still have favourable feelings towards France, notwithstanding the injuries she had received from the latter country? Because the two nations were of the same race. Why were England and France so inveterately opposed? Because upon their opposite coasts the Teutonic and Latin races came into close contact?' Again and again he returned to the state of Italy, spoke of their jealousies and hatreds, one town of another; said that a man in Milan would not lend his money upon mortgage in Cremona or Padua, because 'he could not see the church steeple.' It struck me that his hatred of the Italians partook of the feeling described by Rochefoucault when he says that we never forgive those whom we have injured. Speaking of Austria, he dilated upon the great diversity of the character and condition of the people, and seemed to be vindicating his conservative policy. 'How could they have a representative system, when men from different parts of the empire, if assembled as representatives in the capital, could not understand each other? The Emperor was King of Hungary, of Lombardy, and of Bohemia, Count of Tyrol, and Archduke of Austria.' He alluded to the generally comfortable state of the people, and wished me to examine into their condition. He seemed to speak on the defensive, like a man conscious that public opinion in Europe was not

favourable to his policy; he threw in parenthetically, and with a delicate finesse, some compliments, such as 'I wish I was an Englishman.' 'I speak like yourself, as a practical man, and not in the language of romance.' 'You and I are of the same race,' etc. He alluded to Ireland, and said he could not discover a key for the solution of the difficulty: in other countries reforms were wanted, but there a social system must be created out of chaos. He is probably the last of those state physicians who, looking only to the symptoms of a nation, content themselves with superficial remedies from day to day, and never attempt to probe beneath the surface, to discover the source of the evils which afflict the social system. This order of statesmen will pass away with him, because too much light has been shed upon the laboratory of governments, to allow them to impose upon mankind with the old formulas. 1847. Æt. 43.

"After leaving Prince Metternich, I called upon Baron Kübeck, minister of finance, a man of a totally different character from his chief. He is a simple, sincere, and straightforward man; expressed himself favourably to a relaxation of the protective system, but spoke of the difficulties which powerful interests put in his way; said that Dr. List had succeeded in misleading the public mind on the question of protection. A visit from Prince Esterhazy, who was upwards of twenty years ambassador in England; he remarked that diplomacy upon the old system was now mere humbug, for that the world was much too well informed upon all that was going on in every country to allow ambassadors to mystify matters."

"*Dresden, July 21st.*—Called on M. Zeschau, the Saxon finance minister, an able, hard-working man, who also fills the office of minister for foreign affairs; tells me the land is much divided in Saxony, that the owner of an estate worth 60,000*l.* is deemed a large proprietor; the majority of the farmers

1847. Æt. 43. cultivate their own land; in some of the hilly districts the weavers rent a small patch of ground for garden or potatoes; the feudal service, or corvée, has been abolished in Saxony since 1833, having been commuted into fixed payments, which will be redeemed gradually in a few years. He spoke of Ireland, and said he would dispose of the uncultivated land in the same way as they do in Saxony of the mines of coal, etc. If after a certain fixed period the proprietor of the land will not work them, they are let by the government to other parties, subject to the payment of a rent to the owner, according to the produce raised."

"*Dresden, July 22nd.*—Went with M. Krug to see the collection of jewels, and articles of carving, sculpture, etc. in the green vaults. Then to the royal library, and made the acquaintance of M. Falkenstein, the chief librarian, a learned and interesting man, who showed us a manuscript work by Luther, and some other curiosities. M. Falkenstein is acquainted with Hebrew, Greek, and Latin critically, is also learned in the Arabic, Persian, and Sclavonic languages, speaks French, German, English, Italian, etc.; his salary, as head librarian, having no one over him, is 150*l.*, and he has a wife and six children! Speaking of Luther's coarseness, he said that there are some of his letters in the library so grossly violent and abusive that they are unfit to be read in the presence of women. M. Falkenstein is the author of a life of Kosciusko, the Polish patriot, whom he knew when he was a boy at Soleure, in Switzerland, where the old warrior died. He described him as very amiable and charitable; he was accustomed to ride an old horse who was so used to the habit of his master of giving alms to beggars, that he would stop instinctively when he came near to a man in rags. . . . Saw in a shop-window to-day a silk handkerchief for sale, with my portrait engraved and my name attached."

"*Berlin, July 28th.*—Went to Babelsberg, near Potsdam,

at five in the afternoon, to visit the Prince of Prussia, 1847.
the King's brother and heir presumptive to the throne.* A Æt. 48.
little before seven I found the Prince and Princess and their attendants in the garden. He is a straight-forward, soldier-like man, she a clever woman, speaking English well. A school for the officers' sons had been invited to visit the grounds; the youths, dressed in a military costume, were inspected by the Prince, and afterwards the Princess walked along the lines and accosted some of the boys in the front rank. Then some large balls were produced, and the Princess began the fun by throwing them amongst the lads, who scrambled for them; the Prince joined in the amusement, and they pelted each other with great glee. The King soon afterwards arrived from his palace at Sans Souci, and went familiarly amongst the scholars, who were afterwards entertained at a long table with cakes, chocolate, etc. The rest of us then sat down to tea at a couple of tables under the trees, the Princess presiding and pouring out the tea, the King and the rest partaking unostentatiously, everybody seated, and with hats and caps on. The King speaks English well, is highly educated, said to be clever, but impulsive, and not practical. He is fifty-two, with a portly figure, and a thoroughly good-natured, unaffected German face.

"Met Baron Von Humboldt, a still sturdy little man, with a clear grey eye, born in 1769, and in his seventy-eighth year; tells me he allows himself only four to five hours' sleep. He has a fine massive forehead, his manners are courtier-like, he lives in the palace of Sans Souci, near the King. He spoke highly of Jefferson, whom he knew intimately; remarked of Lord Brougham that, like Raphael, he had three manners, and that he had known him in his earliest and best manner. At dusk we entered the chateau, sat down at a large round table, and were served with a

* The present Emperor of Germany.

1847. plain supper; were afterwards conveyed to the railway-
ÆT. 43. station in a carriage, and reached Berlin at eleven o'clock."

"*Berlin, July 29th.*—Went with Mr. Howard to call upon Dr. Eichhorn, at present Minister of Public Instruction, but formerly in the department of trade, and who took an active part in the formation of the Zollverein, an able and enthusiastic man; he stated that the originators of the customs-union did not contemplate the establishment of a protective system; on the contrary, it was distinctly laid down that the duties on foreign goods should not as a rule exceed ten per cent. To the opera in the evening, and was introduced to M. Nothomb, the Belgian minister, a clever, ready man. M. Nothomb thinks the Corn Laws of Belgium will soon be abolished, and says, after the late calamities, arising from the scarcity of food, all Europe ought to unite in abolishing for ever every restriction on the corn trade; he thinks the next ministry in Belgium, although its head will probably be an ardent Free Trader, will be obliged to advance still further in the path of restriction; that the majority of the chambers is monopolist. '*An absolute government may represent an idea, but elective legislatures represent interests.*' The enlightened ministers of Prussia are overruled by the clamours of the chambers of Wurtemberg, Bavaria, and Baden, the majorities of which are protectionist. He remarked that France stood in the way of European progress, for, so long as she maintained her prohibitive system, the other nations of the continent would be slow to adopt the principles of Free Trade."

"*Berlin, July 30th.*—Went with Mr. Howard to call on M. Kuhne, one of the originators of the Zollverein. When Saxony joined it, she objected to the high duties which were payable upon foreign goods. Now the manufacturers of that country are wanting still higher protection; he is not of opinion that Hamburg will join the Zollverein; is

not sanguine about effecting any reduction of the protective duties; only hopes to prevent their augmentation. M. Kuhne has the character of being an able and honest man. To the museum; the collection of statues and busts but a poor affair after seeing the galleries of Italy, and the pictures very inferior to those at Dresden or Vienna. Called on M. Dieterici, Director of the Bureau of Statistics, an earnest Free Trader, says all the leading statesmen of Prussia are opposed to the protective system, which is forced upon the Zollverein by the states of the south, particularly Bavaria, Baden, and Wurtemberg, and by the manufacturers of the Rhenish provinces. Professor Tellkampf called; he says the real object which the Prussian Government has in view, talking of differential duties on navigation to England, is to coerce Holland into a more liberal system, and probably to induce her to join the Zollverein. . . . . In the conversation with M. Kuhne he touched upon the state of Ireland, and remarked that society has to be reconstructed in that country; that we have the work of Cromwell and William to do over again in a better manner."

"*Berlin, July* 31*st.*—Several persons called in the morning. Went by railway to Potsdam to dine with the King at three o'clock at Sans Souci. About twenty-five to thirty persons sat down, nearly all in court costume, and most of them in military dresses. The King good-humoured and affable, very little ceremony, the dinner over at half past four, when the company walked in the garden. On coming away the King shook hands. In the evening attended a public dinner given to me by about 180 Free-traders of Berlin, the mayor of the city in the chair; he commenced the speaking at the second course, and it was kept up throughout the dinner, which was prolonged for nearly three hours. Two-thirds of the meeting appeared to understand my English speech, which was afterwards translated into

1847. German by Doctor Asher. The speeches were rather long,
ÆT. 43. and the auditory phlegmatic when compared with an Italian dinner-party. Mr. Warren, the United States Consul at Trieste, made the best speech, in German. Alluding to my tour in France, Spain, Italy, and Germany, he said that no English politician of former times, no Chatham, Burke, or Fox could have obtained those proofs of public sympathy in foreign countries which had been offered to me; in their days the politics of one state were considered hostile to others; not only each nation was opposed to its neighbour, but city was against city, town against country, class was arranged against class, and corporations were in hostility to individual rights: he adduced the fact of my favourable reception in foreign countries as a proof of the existence of a broader and more generous view of the interests of mankind."

"*Berlin, August 1st.*—Baron Von Humboldt called, expressed in strong and courteous terms his disapproval of Lord Palmerston's foreign policy in Portugal and Greece, especially of his demanding from the latter a peremptory payment of a paltry sum of money. I expressed my doubts if the Greeks were at present fitted for constitutional self-government, upon which he remarked that it was much easier for a nation to preserve its independence than its freedom. . . . Wrote a note to Dr. Asher declining his invitation to address a party of Free Traders, and expressing my determination not to interfere in the domestic concerns of Prussia."

"*Berlin, August 5th.*—The Prussian law of 1818, and the tariff which followed it, form the foundation of the German Zollverein. The former system of Frederick the Great, and which had lasted for upwards of half a century, was one of the most prohibitive in respect to the importation of foreign goods ever enforced. The prohibition of the entrance of foreign manufactures, even of those of Saxony,

was the rule. Yet the manufactures of Eastern Prussia continued to decline; whilst in Saxony, Westphalia, and the Rhenish provinces industry grew up, and flourished without protection. At the end of fifty years of the trial of Frederick's system, such was the result. . . . The law of 26th of May, 1818, sets forth freedom of commerce as the fundamental principle of the new system of customs; it enacted that as a rule the duty on foreign manufactures shall not exceed ten per cent. ad valorem according to the average prices." 1847. Æt. 43.

"*Stettin, August 7th.*—Took leave of Kate this morning at the Hamburgh railway, and then started for Stettin at seven, in company with Mr. Swaine. The railway passes through a poor sandy country thinly peopled, and with light crops of grain. The exportation of corn was prohibited this year from Prussia, also of potatoes in May; one of the ministers stated in the Diet publicly that the latter measure could be of no use, inasmuch as at that time, no potatoes could be sent out of the country with advantage, but advocating the law on the plea that it was necessary to tranquillize the people; the use of potatoes was also interdicted in distilleries for three months, by which the food for cattle (the residue of the potatoes) was curtailed, and caused great embarrassment to the proprietors. . . . In the evening dined with about eighty or ninety persons, who assembled at a day's notice to meet me; the company sat at dinner for nearly four hours; speeches between each course; the orators launched freely into politics."

"*Stettin, August 8th.*—The Baltic ports are in no way benefited by the manufacturing interests of the south and the Rhenish provinces, and they are directly sacrificed by the protective system. The few furnaces for making iron in Silesia, and those on the Rhine, have imposed a tax upon the whole community, by laying a duty of 20*s*. a ton upon

1847. pig iron. Silesia is a wheat-growing country for export.
ÆT. 43. The protective duties of the Zollverein are particularly injurious to the Baltic provinces of Prussia, which export wheat, timber, and other raw produce. The manufacturing districts of Rhenish Prussia are entirely cut off and detached from this part of the kingdom; they receive their imports, and send out their exports by the Rhine, not through a Prussian port; thus the protective system stands in the way of the increase of the foreign trade in the Prussian ports, and stops the growth of the mercantile marine, without even offering the compensation of an artificial trade in manufactures. In fact, owing to her peculiar geographical position, the maritime prosperity of Prussia is more completely sacrificed than in any other State by the protective system."

"*Dantzic, August* 10*th*, 1847.— . . . . Dined with about fifty of the merchants. Nearly all appeared to understand English, several speakers, all in English, excepting one. There are about five or six British merchants only here—mostly Scotch. Dantzic is thoroughly English in its sympathies."

"*Tauroggen, Russia, August* 13*th*.—Left Königsberg at seven o'clock this morning in an extra post courier in company with one of Mr. Adelson's clerks, whom he kindly sent with me across the Russian frontier.

"My companion, who is a Pole and a Russian subject, and, as he terms himself, an Israelite, gives me a poor picture of the character of the Polish nobility. Making a comparison between them and the Russians, he remarked that the latter are barbarians, but the former are civilized scamps; there is some respect for truth in the Russian, but none in the Pole. Crossed the Niemen at Tilsit; were detained upon the bridge of boats for half an hour whilst several long rafts of timber passed; the men who were

upon them, and who live for months upon the voyage down from Volhynia to Memel on these floats, had a wild, savage appearance, reminding me of the Irish. Soon after, reached the Russian frontier. I rallied my companion on his rather thoughtful aspect on approaching his native country. 'It is not exactly fear that I feel,' he replied, 'but I do find a disagreeable sensation here,' striking his breast; 'perhaps it is something in the air which always affects me at this spot.' Arrived at Tauroggen at eight o'clock, the distance from Konigsberg being about a hundred English miles. The chief of the Custom House was very civil, and declined to search my luggage.

Riga, Aug. 16th.—"The distance from Tauroggen to Riga is about 220 versts, or about 160 miles, which are accomplished in eighteen hours exactly, at an expense of 42*s*. The country generally a plain as far as the eye can reach, with here and there only some slight undulations; mostly a light soil and sandy, but everywhere capable of cultivation. Large tracts covered with forests of fir, interspersed with oak, birch, etc., with patches here and there of cultivated land. The country very thinly peopled; the villages consist of a few wooden houses thatched; scarcely saw a stone or brick house. The villages through which we passed on the high road on the beginning of our journey were generally peopled with Jews, a dirty, idle-looking people, the men wearing long robes with a girdle, and the women often with turbans, the men also wearing the long beard. These wretched beings creep about their wretched villages, or glance suspiciously out of their doors, as if they had a suspicion of some danger at every step. They never work with their hands in the fields or on the roads excepting to avert actual starvation."

"*St. Petersburgh, Aug. 20th.*—Called on Count Nesselrode, the Foreign Minister, a polite little man of sixty-five, with a profusion of smiles. Like Metternich, he strikes me more as

1847. Æt. 43. an adept at finesse and diplomacy, than as a man of genius or of powerful talent. He was very, very civil, spoke of my Free Trade labours, which he said would be beneficial to Russia, offered me letters to facilitate my journey to Moscow, and invited me to dine. Called on Lord Bloomfield, our minister, an agreeable man."

"*St. Petersburgh, Aug.* 21*st.*—Went at six o'clock, in company with Colonel Townsend, Captain Little, and another, to see the grand parade, about twenty-five versts from St. Petersburgh. The emperor, the finest man in the field; the empress, a very emaciated, care-worn person, resembling in her melancholy expression the Queen of the French. It is remarkable that two of the most unhappy and suffering countenances, and the most attenuated frames I have seen on the continent, are those of these two royal personages, the wives of the greatest sovereigns of the continent, who have accidentally ascended thrones to which they were not claimants by the right of succession; yet these victims of anxiety are envied as the favourites of fortune."

"*Moscow, Aug.* 25*th.*—Started from St. Petersburgh on Sunday morning, at seven, and reached this place at six this morning. During the first day, passed through several villages built entirely of wood, generally of logs laid horizontally upon each other; some of these are not without efforts at refinement, being ornamented with rude carved work, and the fronts sometimes gaudily painted. Many of the houses appeared quite new, and others were in the course of erection; it being Sunday, the inhabitants were in their best clothes; work seemed everywhere suspended. There appears a great traffic between the old and new metropolis, both in merchandise and passengers; mail coaches, diligences, and private carriages, very numerous. The face of the country flat and monotonous; a strip of cultivated land, growing rye, oats, etc., runs generally along the roadside, and beyond, the

eye rests upon the eternal pine forests. The inns at the post stations excellent; in two of them the walls of the rooms were covered with English engravings of Morland's village scenes; tea everywhere good, and served promptly, in the English fashion. On alighting I saw about thirty men, lying in two rows upon the pavement, in the open air, wrapped in their coats or sheepskins, some of their heads resting on a pillow of hay, and others upon the rough stones. I was told, on inquiry, that they were postillions waiting to be called up, as their services might be required—a hard life."

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"*Moscow, August 25th.*—After a couple of hours' sleep in a clean and comfortable bed at Howard's English lodging-house, I sallied out alone for a stroll of an hour or two. This city surprises me; I was not prepared for so interesting and unique a spectacle. One might fancy himself in Bagdad or Grenada a thousand years ago. The people are more Asiatic in their appearance and dress than at St. Petersburgh, and also more superstitious, I should say, judging from the ceremonials of bowing and crossing which I see going on at every church door, and opposite to every little picture of the Virgin. Everywhere struck with astonishment at the novel and beautiful features of this picturesque city of the Czars."

"*Nishni Novogorod, August 27th.*—Left Moscow at half-past seven on Wednesday evening in the same carriage by which I had come from St. Petersburgh. It was dusk when I passed beyond the suburbs of the widely extended city of upwards of 300,000 souls. The next morning's light revealed the same scenery as that through which I had passed previously; the country so flat and the view so constantly bounded with straight lines of fir forests, that I was frequently under the illusion that the ocean was visible in the distant horizon. . . . . Reached Nishni Novogorod at six o'clock this evening, and passed through a long

1847. avenue of wooden booths full of merchandise, and amidst
ÆT. 43. crowds of people to the hotel, where I found comfortable quarters. Baron Alexander Meyendorff called, chief of a kind of Board of Trade at Moscow, an active-minded and intelligent German, possessing much statistical knowledge about Russian trade and manufactures. . . . He thinks the geographical and climatical features of Russia will always prevent its being anything but a great village, as he termed it, it being such a vast, unbroken plain; there are no varieties of climate or occupations, and as the weather is intensely cold for half the year, every person wants double the quantity of land which would suffice to maintain him in more genial climates; as there is no coal, the pine forests are as necessary as his rye field. Wherever the winter endures for upwards of half the year, the population must as a general rule be thin."

"*Nishni Novogorod, August 28th.*—The Bokhara caravan arrived yesterday, bringing about a thousand hundredweight of cotton from Asia, of a short staple like our Surats, with skins, common prints, dressing-gowns of silk and other articles. I visited three merchants, some of them handsome swarthy men; their goods were brought upon camels as far as Orenberg; the journey from Bokhara to Nishni occupies about three months. This caravan had been stopped by a tribe of the Kirghese. One of these men, a knowing, talkative fellow, had been in London and picked up a few words of English. In the evening dined and took tea with Baron A. de Meyendorff, and met Baronoff, the great printer and manufacturer, an energetic and sensible man. . . . He has taken some land on lease in the territory of the Khan of Khiva for growing madder for his print works; he says that the madder he gets from Asia is cheaper than that which he formerly got from France and Holland, in the proportion of two and a half to

"*Moscow, Aug.* 31*st.*—Found my companion a man of great good-nature, and full of information upon the commerce and manufactures of Russia. 1847. ÆT. 48.

" . . . . The Emperor and the higher functionaries of the Government are anxious for good administration, and they are all enlightened and able men, but the subordinates or bureaucracy are generally a corrupt or ignorant body. There are three or four grave difficulties for the future—the emancipation of the serfs—the religious tone, which is one of mere unmeaning formalities, and which, if not adapted to the progress of ideas, will become a cause of infidelity on the one hand, and blind bigotry on the other—the *tiers-état*, comprising the freed serfs, the manufacturers, and the bureaucracy: all these are elements tending to dangerous collisions of opinion for the future, unless gradually provided against by the Government.

" . . . . At Bogorodsk we paid a visit to the halting-station of prisoners who are on their way from Moscow to Siberia; upwards of twenty were lying upon wooden benches, their heads resting upon bundles of clothes. Baron Meyendorff questioned them as to the cause of their banishment; three confessed that theirs was murder, and another coining: several were for smaller offences; the latter were not ironed like the greater criminals. One man said he was exiled because he had no passport, which meant that he was a vagabond. One man was recognised by the Baron as having been a servant in a nobleman's family which he was acquainted with, and he stated, in answer to the inquiry, that he was sent to Siberia because he was ill-tempered to his owner and master; this man, like all the rest, seemed to be in a state of mental resignation quite oriental. 'If God has allowed me to be banished, I suppose I deserve

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it,' was his remark. In another room was a prisoner, a nobleman, as he was called, who confessed to the Baron that poverty had led him to commit an act of forgery; he was not ironed, nor was his head shaved like the rest. In a third room were two women; one of them said her offence was being without a passport; the other was a woman who stated herself to be a widow, and whose little daughter, a child about seven years of age, was sleeping upon a bundle of old clothes at her side. She said she was banished at the request of her mistress, she being her serf, because she was ill-tempered. I gave these poor women some silver.

" . . . . On leaving the mill, a few steps brought me into the midst of the agricultural operations in the neighbourhood and what a contrast did the implements of husbandry present to the masterpieces of machinery which I had just been inspecting! The ploughs were constructed upon the model of those in use a thousand years ago; the scythes and reaping-hooks might have been the implements of the ancient Scythians; the spades in the hands of the peasants were either entirely of wood or merely tipped with iron; the fields were yielding scarcely a third of the crop of grain which an English farmer would derive from similar land; there was no science traceable in the manuring or cropping of the land, no intelligence in the improving of the breed of the cattle, and I could not help asking myself by what perversity of judgment an agricultural people could be led to borrow from England its newest discoveries in machinery for spinning cotton, and to reject the lessons which it offered for the improvement of that industry upon which the wealth and strength of the Russian empire so pre-eminently depend.

" . Baron Meyendorff tells me that an association

of merchants proposes to export a cargo of Russian manufactures to the Pacific as an experiment, and amongst the articles which they think of sending are boots and shoes, sail-cloth, cordage, low-priced woollens, linen towels, coarse linens, such as ravenduck; articles made of wood, such as boxes, etc.; and nails, etc. Here are many manufactured products which are natural to Russia, and who can say how much the development of such indigenous industries may be interfered with by the protection of cotton goods, etc.? Baron Meyendorff considers Russia more favoured than any other country in the production of wools. In Russia there are public granaries in every commune, in which, according to law, there ought always to be a store of grain kept for the safety of the people against scarcity; this, like all their laws in this great empire, is little more than waste paper. Instead of ordering the erection of public granaries, the Government, would have done more wisely to have devoted its attention to the construction of roads by which grain could have circulated more freely in the country, and thus have prevented the occasional famine in one part of the empire whilst there is a glut in another. If roads were made in Russia, the merchants and dealers in grain would supply the wants of any particular district by equalising the supply of all."

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"*St. Petersburgh, Sept. 7th.*—Some time ago a Yankee adventurer asked permission to establish a hunting-station on the North American territory belonging to Russia, but it was refused. A year or two after this occurred, Baron Meyendorff happened to be calling upon his friend the home minister, who, putting a letter into his hand, remarked, 'Here is something to amuse you; it has occasioned me half an hour's incessant laughter.' It was a despatch from the governor of Irkutsk, describing in pompous language

1847. an 'invasion,' which had taken place in the North American
ÆT. 43. territory of the Russian empire by an armed force, consisting of from eighty to one hundred men, commanded by an American, and having three pieces of artillery. It was the Yankee fur-trader, who had taken French leave and squatted himself upon the most favourable situation in the Czar's dominions for carrying on his hunting operations. The question arose how he was to be ejected. There was no Russian armed force or authority of any kind within many hundreds, perhaps thousand, miles of the invading army. The expense of fitting out an armament for the purpose was then calculated, but the distance and the difficulty of approaching the Yankee headquarters were such formidable obstacles, that it was thought better to leave the enemy in possession of his conquered territory, and there he remains now, carrying on his operations against the bears and the beavers of the Czar without molestation. This gives an idea of the weakness of a government whose dominions extend to upwards of a twelvemonth's journey from its capital."

"*St. Petersburgh, Sept.* 11*th.*—. . . . Dined at the English club, and met a party of Russians; they rise from table as soon as they have swallowed their dinner, and proceed to the card-table, billiards, or skittles. There is no intellectual society, no topic of general interest is discussed—an un-idea'd party. My table companions, the English merchants, were of opinion that extensive smuggling is carried on, particularly in sugar; they spoke freely of the corruption of the employés, and the general propensity to live beyond their means. One of them mentioned an anecdote of the corruption of the government employés. He had a contract with one of the departments for a quantity of *lignum vitæ* at eight roubles a pood; upon its being

delivered it was pronounced inferior, and rejected after being stamped at the end of each log; he called at the bureau to complain and remonstrate, but without success; and on leaving was followed by a person who asked his address and said he would call upon him. He was as good as his word, and the following conversation occurred: 'You have charged your wood too low; it is not possible to furnish a good quality at eight roubles; you must send in another delivery at twelve roubles.' 'But I have no other quality,' was the reply. 'Leave that to me,' said the person. 'You must address a petition to the department, saying that you are prepared to send in another delivery; I will draw up the petition, you must sign it; I will manage the rest, and you will pay me 1000 roubles, which will be half the difference of the extra price you will receive.' He consulted with his friends, who advised him to comply, and he accordingly signed the petition. The person then had the rejected *lignum vitæ* conveyed to a warehouse, where the ends were sawed off the logs to remove the stamp, and the identical wood was delivered, and passed for full weight and good quality."

"*St. Petersburgh, Sept.* 12*th.*—Went in the morning to the Kasan Cathedral, where I found a full congregation, two-thirds at least being men. Went with Mr. Edwards by railway to see the horse-races at Tsarskoe Selo; a large proportion of the persons who went by the train were English. The emperor and his family and a good muster of fashionables were present on the course, but the amusements wanted life and animation, which nothing but a mass of people capable of feeling and expressing an interest in the sports of the day can present. Afterwards went to the Vauxhall of Petersburgh to dine. An Englishman accosted me in a broad Devonshire

1847. accent, and said he was a freeman of Tavistock, and would
ÆT. 43. give me a plumper if I came there as a candidate. Met another man from Stockport who is in a cotton-mill here; he says it works from six a.m. to eight p.m., stopping for an hour; that the engine runs thirteen hours a day; says double the number of hands, as compared with the English mills, are employed to produce a given result; the English labourer is the cheapest in Europe."

"*St. Petersburgh, Sept.* 13*th.*—Mr. Edwards, attaché to the English ministry, mentioned an anecdote illustrative of the inordinate self-complacency of my countrymen. They complained to him that at the Commercial Association, a kind of club consisting of natives and English, the air of 'Rule Britannia' had been hissed by the Russians; they were discomposed at the idea of foreigners being averse to the naval domination of England!"

"*St. Petersburgh, Sept.* 15*th.*—Paid a visit to the Minister of Finance; he invited me to speak to him frankly as to my opinions on the manufactures of Russia, and I profited by the opportunity of making a Free Trade speech to him of half an hour's length. He was reported to me as an incompetent, ignorant man, but he has at least the merit of being willing to learn; he listened like a man of good common sense, and his observations were very much to the point. M. de Boutowsky called, who has written a work upon political economy and in favour of Free Trade, in the Russian language. In the course of the conversation he remarked that Peter the Great commenced the system of regulating and interfering with trade and manufactures in Russia. Another instance added to those of Cromwell, Frederick the Great, Louis XIV., Napoleon, and Mehemet Ali, showing that warriors and despots are generally bad economists, and that they

instinctively carry their ideas of force and violence into 1847.
the civil policy of their governments. Free Trade is a ÆT. 43.
principle which recognises the paramount advantage of individual action. Military conquerors, on the contrary, trust only to the organized efforts of bodies of men directed by their own personal will.

Dined with Count Nesselrode, and sat beside Count Kisseleff, one of the ablest of the ministers, having the direction of the public domains. After dinner, other persons of rank joined us in the drawing-room, and we had a lively discussion upon Free Trade. Count Kisseleft talked freely and without much knowledge of the question, whilst Nesselrode sat quietly with the rest of the company listening to the controversy. My opponents were moderate in their pretensions, and made a stand only for the protection of industries in their infancy. All parties threw overboard cotton-spinning as an exotic which ought not to be encouraged in Russia. A Free Trade debate in Nesselrode's drawing-room must at least have been a novelty."

"*St. Petersburgh, Sept. 23rd.*—Called by invitation upon Prince Oldenburgh, cousin of the Emperor, a man of amiable and intelligent mind, a patron of schools and charities. He spoke with affection and admiration of England, of its people, their religous and moral character, their public spirit and domestic virtues. Speaking of Russia, he said that its two greatest evils were corruption and drunkenness. Was entertained at a public dinner by about two hundred merchants and others at the establishment of mineral waters in one of the islands; a fine hall, prettily decorated, and with a band of music in an adjoining room. After I had spoken, an Englishman named Hodgson, manager of Loader's spinning-mill, who was formerly a Radical orator

1847. in England, addressed the meeting, pretty much in the
ÆT. 43. style of some of my old Chartist opponents in England, which afforded me an opportunity of replying to him, greatly to the satisfaction of the meeting. I was struck with the freedom of speech and absence of restraint which pervaded the meeting, and which contrasted with the timidity I had sometimes seen in Italy and Austria. The meeting went off well, and everybody seemed well satisfied. Such a numerous party had never assembled at a public dinner in St. Petersburgh."

"*Lubeck, Sept. 29th.*—Left Cronstadt at two o'clock on Sunday morning, 26th, by the 'Nicolai' steamer, and after a favourable passage without adventures of any kind reached Travenmunde at eight o'clock this morning. My head was too much disturbed by the sea voyage to be fit for numerous introductions, so after breakfasting and resting a few hours, I proceeded in company with our Consul, who had been so good as to come down to meet me, to Lubeck, a pleasant drive of nine miles."

"*Lubeck, Sept. 30th.*—Captain Stanley Carr called; he has a large estate about four miles distant, which he has occupied for twenty years, and cultivates with great success upon the English system. He has a thousand acres under the plough, a small steam-engine for thrashing, and all the best implements. He says he employs three times as many people as were at work upon the land before he bought it; he raises four times as much produce; has drained and subsoiled the farm; sells his butter and cattle at twenty-five per cent. higher prices than his neighbours. Speaking of his visit to Bohemia, where he spent three months of last year, he said the agriculture was in a very wretched state. The peasants were without capital, and the *corvée* system prevailed, by which the landlord's land was cultivated so

badly by the peasantry that he would not accept an estate at a gift, to be obliged to work it upon that system. He told me an anecdote of a man engaged in the manufactory of iron in that country, who complained of the competition of the English, who 'paid the freight to Hamburgh, and then the expense of carrying it up the Elbe to Bohemia, and then,' he added, 'they undersell me twenty-five per cent. at my own door, and be d—d to them!' In consequence of which he went off to Vienna to call for higher protection to the iron manufacture, by way of supporting 'native industry.'! . . . In the evening was entertained by a party of about seventy merchants and others of Lubeck at a public dinner. After dinner went to 'the cellar' under the Town Hall, a famous resort for the people, where they drink beer, sing, and listen to music. On descending into these vaults, I was enveloped in clouds of smoke. At one end was a band of music; in another recess was a festive meeting of the German *savans*, some of whom, with their wives, were seated at tables; others were crowded round a speaker, who was addressing them, whilst almost invisible in a cloud of smoke. It resembled a midnight scene in a 'coal-hole' or 'finis' in London—yet in this odd place was to be found a hundred of the first professors and literary men of Germany. I was introduced to Grimm, the famous critic and linguist."

"*Hamburgh, Oct. 5th*, 1847.—In the evening dined with about seven hundred persons at a Free Trade banquet; Mr. Ruperti in the chair. Sat down at half-past five, and the dinner and speeches lasted till ten. The speakers were free in the range of their topics, advocated the freedom of the press, quizzed the regulations of the city of Hamburgh, and turned into ridicule the Congress of Vienna and the Germanic diet."

1847. "*Manchester, Oct.* 12*th.*—Left the Elbe on Saturday
ÆT. 43. morning, 9th, and reached London on Monday at eleven o'clock. Was told on board that the steamers carry cattle from Hamburgh to London for thirty shillings a head, and sheep for three shillings. Slept at the Victoria Hotel, Euston Square, on Monday, and left for Manchester by the six o'clock train on Tuesday, reaching home at three o'clock."

CHAPTER XIX.

ELECTION FOR THE WEST RIDING.—PURCHASE OF DUNFORD.—CORRESPONDENCE.

DURING Cobden's absence in the autumn of 1847, a general election had taken place. While he was at St. Petersburg he learned that he had been returned not only for his former borough of Stockport, but for the great constituency of the West Riding of Yorkshire. He wrote to thank Mr. Bright for his powerful and friendly services at the election. "But I cannot conceal from you," he went on to say, "that my return for the West Riding has very much embarrassed and annoyed me. Personally and publicly speaking, I should have preferred Stockport. It is the greatest compliment ever offered to a public man; but had I been consulted, I should have respectfully declined."[1] After the compliment had actually been conferred, it was too late to refuse it, and Cobden represented the West Riding in two parliaments, until the political crash came in 1857. The triumph of Cobden's election for the great Yorkshire constituency was matched by the election of Mr. Bright for Manchester, in spite of the active and unscrupulous efforts of some old-fashioned Liberals. They pretended to find him

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[1] Sept. 18, 1847.

1847. violent and reckless, he wanted social position, and so forth.
ÆT. 43. For the time they were swept away by the overwhelming wave of Mr. Bright's popularity, but they nursed their wrath and had their revenge ten years afterwards.

Another important step had been taken while Cobden was abroad. His business was brought to an end, and the affairs relating to it wound up by one or two of his friends. A considerable portion of the sum which had been subscribed for the national testimonial to him, had been absorbed in settling outstanding claims. With a part of what remained Cobden, immediately after his return from his travels, purchased the small property at Dunford on which he was born. He gave up his house in Manchester, and when in London lived for some years to come at Westbourne Terrace. Afterwards he lived in lodgings during the session, or more frequently accepted quarters at the house of one of his more intimate friends, Mr. Hargreaves, Mr. Schwabe, or Mr. Paulton. His home was henceforth at Dunford. His brother Frederick, who had shared the failure of their fortunes at Manchester, took up his abode with him and remained until his death in 1858. Five or six years after the acquisition of his little estate, Cobden pulled down the ancestral farm-house, and built a modest residence upon the site. In this for the rest of his life he passed all the time that he could spare from public labours. Once in these days, Cobden was addressing a meeting at Aylesbury. He talked of the relations of landlord and tenant, and referred by way of illustration to his own small property. Great is the baseness of men. Somebody in the crowd called out to ask him how he had got his property. "I am indebted for it," said Cobden with honest readiness, "to the bounty of my countrymen. It was the scene of my birth and my infancy; it was the property of my ancestors; and it is by the munificence of my countrymen that this

small estate, which had been alienated from my father by necessity, has again come into my hands, and enabled me to light up afresh the hearth of my father where I spent my own childhood. I say that no warrior duke who owns a vast domain by the vote of the Imperial Parliament, holds his property by a more honourable title than I possess mine."[1] If the baseness of men is great, so too is their generosity of response to a magnanimous appeal, and the boisterous cheering of the crowd showed that they felt Cobden's answer to be good and sufficient.

The following is Cobden's own account, at the time, of the country in which he had once more struck a little root. He is writing to Mr. Ashworth:—

"*Midhurst, Oct.* 7, 1850.—I have been for some weeks in one of the most secluded corners of England. Although my letter is dated from the quiet little close borough of Midhurst, the house in which I am living is about one and a half miles distant, in the neighbouring rural parish of Heyshott. The roof which now shelters me is that under which I was born, and the room where I now sleep is the one in which I first drew breath. It is an old farm-house, which had for many years been turned into labourers' cottages. With the aid of the whitewasher and carpenter, we have made a comfortable weather-proof retreat for summer; and we are surrounded with pleasant woods, and within a couple of miles of the summit of the South Down hills, where we have the finest air and some of the prettiest views in England. At some future day I shall be delighted to initiate you into rural life. A Sussex hill-side village will be an interesting field for an exploring excursion for you. We have a population under three hundred in our parish. The acreage is about 2000, of which one proprietor,

[1] *Speeches*, i. 440. Jan. 9, 1850. In the same place will be found his account of the way in which he dealt with his land.

1847. Colonel Wyndham, owns 1200 acres. He is a non-resident,
ÆT. 43. as indeed are all the other proprietors. The clergyman is also non-resident. He lives at the village of Stedham, about three miles distant, where he has another living and a parsonage-house. He comes over to our parish to perform service once on Sundays, alternately in the morning and afternoon. The church is in a ruinous state, the tower having fallen down many years ago. The parson draws about 300*l*. a year in tithes, besides the produce of a few acres of glebe land. He is a decent man, with a large family, spoken well of by everybody, and himself admits the evils of clerical absenteeism. We have no school and no schoolmaster, unless I give that title to a couple of cottages where illiterate old women collect a score or two of infants whilst their parents are in the fields. Thus 'our village' is without resident proprietors or clergyman or schoolmaster. Add to these disadvantages, that the farmers are generally deficient of capital, and do not employ so many labourers as they might. The rates have been up to this time about six shillings in the pound. We are not under the new poor law, but in a Gilbert's Union, and almost all our expense is for outdoor relief.

"Here is a picture which will lead you to expect when you visit us a very ignorant and very poor population. There is no post-office in the village. Every morning an old man, aged about seventy, goes into Midhurst for the letters. He charges a penny for every despatch he carries, including such miscellaneous articles as horse collars, legs of mutton, empty sacks, and wheelbarrows. His letter-bag for the whole village contains on an average from two to three letters daily, including newspapers. The only newspapers which enter the parish are two copies of *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, a sound old Tory Protectionist much patronized by drowsy farmers. The wages paid by the farmers are very low, not

exceeding eight shillings a week. I am employing an old man nearly seventy, and his son about twenty-two, and his nephew about nineteen, at digging and removing some fences. I pay the two former nine shillings a week and the last eight shillings, and I am giving a shilling a week more than anybody else is paying. What surprises me is to observe how well the poor fellows work, and how long they last. The South Down air, in the absence of South Down mutton, has something to do with the healthiness of these people, I dare say. The labourers have generally a garden, and an allotment of a quarter of an acre; for the latter they pay three and ninepence a year rent. We are in the midst of woods, and on the borders of common land, so that fuel is cheap. All the poor have a right to cut turf on the common for their firing, which costs two shillings and threepence per thousand. The labourers who live in my cottages have pigs in their sties, but I believe it is not so universally. I have satisfied myself that, however badly off the labourers may be at present, their condition was worse in the time of high-priced corn. In 1847, when bread was double its present price, the wages of the farm labourers were not raised more than two to three shillings a week. At that time a man with a family spent all he earned for bread, and still had not enough to sustain his household. I have it both from the labourers themselves and the millers from whom they buy their flour, that they ran so deeply in debt for food during the high prices of 1847, that they have scarcely been able in some cases up to the present to pay off their score. The *class feeling* amongst the agricultural labourers is in favour of a cheap loaf. They dare not say much about it openly, but their instincts are serving them in the absence of economical knowledge, and they are unanimously against Chowler and the Protectionists.

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I can hardly pretend that in this world's-end spot we can

1847. say that any impulse has been given to the demand for agricultural labourers by the Free Trade policy. Ours is about
ÆT. 43. the last place which will feel its good effects. But there is one good sign which augurs well for the future. Skilled labourers, such as masons, joiners, blacksmiths, painters, and so on, are in very great request, and it is difficult to get work of that kind done in moderate time. I am inclined to think that in more favourable situations an impulse has likewise been imparted to unskilled labour. It is certain that during the late harvest-time there was a great difficulty in obtaining hands on the south side of the Downs towards the sea coast, where labour is in more demand than here under the north side of the hills. I long to live to see an agricultural labourer strike for wages!"

Before he had been many weeks in England, Cobden was drawn into the eager discussion of other parts of his policy, which were fully as important as Free Trade itself. The substitution of Lord Palmerston for Lord Aberdeen at the Foreign Office was instantly followed by the active intervention of the British Government in the affairs of other countries. There was an immediate demand for increased expenditure on armaments. Augmented expenditure meant augmented taxation. Each of the three items of the programme was the direct contradictory of the system which Cobden believed to be not only expedient but even indispensable. His political history from this time down to the year when they both died, is one long antagonism to the ideas which were concentrated in Lord Palmerston. Yet Cobden was too reasonable to believe that there could be a material reduction in armaments, until a great change had taken place in the public opinion of the country with respect to its foreign policy. He always said that no Minister could reduce armaments or expenditure, until the English people abandoned the notion that they were to

regulate the affairs of the world. "In all my travels," he wrote to Mr. Bright, "three reflections constantly occur to me: how much unnecessary solicitude and alarm England devotes to the affairs of foreign countries; with how little knowledge we enter upon the task of regulating the concerns of other people; and how much better we might employ our energies in improving matters at home."[1] He knew that the influential opinion of the country was still against him, and that it would be long before it turned. "Until that time," he said, in words which may be usefully remembered by politicians who are fain to reap before they have sown, "I am content to be on this question as I have been on others in a minority, and in a minority to remain, until I get a majority."

While he was away that famous intrigue known as the Spanish Marriages took place. The King of the French, guided by the austere and devout Guizot, so contrived the marriages of the Queen of Spain and her sister, that in the calculated default of issue from the Queen, the crown of Spain would go to the issue of her sister and the Duke of Montpensier, Louis Philippe's son. Cobden, as we shall see, did not believe that the King was looking so far as this. It was in any case a disgraceful and odious transaction, but events very speedily proved how little reason there was why it should throw the English Foreign Office into a paroxysm. Cobden was moved to write to Mr. Bright upon it:—

"My object in writing again is to speak upon the Marriage question. I have seen with humiliation that the daily newspaper press of England has been lashing the public mind into an excitement (or at least trying to do so) upon the alliance of the Duke of Montpensier with the Infanta. I saw this boy and girl married, and as I looked at them, I could not help exclaiming to myself, 'What a couple to excite the

[1] *To Mr. Bright.* Sept. 18, 1847.

1847. animosity of the people of England and France!' Have we
ÆT. 43. not outgrown the days when sixty millions of people could be set at loggerheads by a family intrigue? Yes, we have probably grown wiser than to repeat the War of Succession, but I see almost as great an evil as actual hostilities in the tone of the press and the intrigues of the diplomatists of England and France. They keep the two nations in a state of distrust and alienation, they familiarize us with the notion that war is still a possible event, and worse still, they furnish the pretext for continually augmenting our standing armaments, and thus oppressing and degrading the people with taxation, interrupting the progress of fiscal reforms, and keeping us in a hostile attitude ready for war.

"I began my political life by writing against this system of foreign interference, and every year's experience confirms me in my early impression that it lies at the bottom of much of our misgovernment at home. My visit to Spain has strengthened, if possible, a hundredfold my conviction that all attempts of England to control or influence the destinies, political and social, of that country are worse than useless. They are mischievous alike to Spaniards and Englishmen. They are a peculiar people not understood by us. They have one characteristic, however, which their whole history might have revealed to us, i.e. their inveterate repugnance to all foreign influences and alliances, and their unconquerable resistance to foreign control. No country in Europe besides is so isolated in its prejudices of race and caste. It has ever been so, whether in the times of the Romans, of the Saracens, of Louis XIV., or of Napoleon. No people are more willing to call in the aid of foreign arms or diplomacy to fight their battles, but they despise and suspect the motives of all who come to help them, and they turn against them the moment their temporary purpose is gained. As for any other nation permanently swaying the destinies of Spain, or

finding in it an ally to be depended on against other Powers, 1847.
it would be as easy to gain such an object with the Bedouins ÆT. 43.
of the Desert, with whom, by the way, the Spaniards have no slight affinity of character. No one who knows the people, nobody who has read their history, can doubt this; and yet our diplomatists and newspaper-writers are pretending alarm at the marriage of the youngest son of Louis Philippe with the Infanta, on the ground of the possible future union of the two countries under one head, or at least under one influence. Nobody knows the absurdity of any such contingency better than Louis Philippe. He feels, no doubt, that it is difficult enough to secure *one* throne permanently for his dynasty, and unless his sagacity be greatly over-rated, he would shrink from the possibility of one of his descendants ever attempting to wear at the same time the crowns of Spain and France. I believe the French King to have had but one object,—to secure a rich wife for his younger son. He is perhaps a little avaricious in his old age, like most other men. But I care nothing for his motives or policy. Looking to the facts, I ask why should the French and English people allow themselves to be embroiled by such family manœuvres? He may have been treacherous to our Queen, but why should kings and queens be allowed to enter into any marriage compacts in the name of their people? You will perhaps tell me when you write that the bulk of the middle class, the reflecting portion of the people of England, do not sympathize with the London daily press on the subject of the Marriage question; and I know that there is a considerable portion of the more intelligent French people who do not approve of all that is written in the Paris papers. But, unhappily, the bulk of mankind do not think for themselves. The newspapers write in the name of the two countries, and to a great extent they form public opinion. Governments and diplomatists act upon the views expressed in the influential journals.

1847. "... . There is one way in which this system of interfering

ÆT. 43. in the politics of Spain is especially mischievous. It prevents Spanish parties from being formed upon a purely domestic basis, and thus puts off the day when the politicians shall devote themselves to their own reforms. At present, all the intrigues of Madrid revolve round the diplomatic manœuvres of France and England. There is another evil arising out of it. It gives the bulk of the Spaniards a false notion of their own position. They are a proud people, they think all Europe is busy with their affairs, they hear of France and England being on the point of going to war about the marriage of one of their princesses, they imagine that Spain is the most important country in the world, and thus they forget their own ignorance, poverty, and political degradation, and of course do not occupy themselves in domestic reforms. If left to themselves, they would soon find out their inferiority, for they are not without a certain kind of common sense.

"I have always had an instinctive monomania against this system of foreign interference, protocolling, diplomatising, etc., and I should be glad if you and our other Free Trade friends, who have beaten the daily broad-sheets into common sense upon another question, would oppose yourselves to the Palmerston system, and try to prevent the Foreign Office from undoing the good which the Board of Trade has done to the people. But you must not disguise from yourself that the evil has its roots in the pugnacious, energetic, self-sufficient, foreigner-despising and pitying character of that noble insular creature, John Bull. Read Washington Irving's description of him fumbling for his cudgel always the moment he hears of any row taking place anywhere on the face of the earth, and bristling up with anger at the very idea of any other people daring to have a quarrel without first asking his consent or inviting him to take a part in it.

1847. ÆT. 43.

" . . . . And the worst fact is, that however often we increase our establishments, we never reduce them. Thus in 1834 and 1835, Mr. Urquhart and the daily press did their utmost to frighten the people of England into the notion that Russia was going to swallow Turkey, and then would land some fine morning at Yarmouth to make a breakfast of England. Our armaments were accordingly increased. In 1840 the Whigs called for 5000 additional soldiers to put down Chartism. In 1846 still further armaments were voted to meet the Oregon dispute. These pretences have all vanished, but the ships and soldiers remain, and taxes are paid to support them. Keep your eye upon our good friend Ward, or depend on it he will be wanting more ships on the plea of our unsettled relations with Spain and France. Probably that is the reason why you read of Admiral Parker being sent to this coast, and his fleet placed at the orders of Mr. Bulwer, of steamers passing between Gibraltar and the Fleet, etc. All this may be intended to prepare John Bull for a haul upon his purse for more ships next session; at least it may be an argument to pass the navy estimates with acclamation. As for any other rational object being gained, it is not in my power here on the spot to comprehend it. The English merchants laugh at the pretence set up by our Admiral to the Spanish authorities on the coast to excuse his appearance in such force 'that he comes to protect British interests.' The British residents have no fear of any injuries. I have seen Englishmen who have lived here during about a score of revolutions, and witnessed a hundred changes of ministries, and who laugh at the idea of any danger. To sum up in a word, our meddling with this country is purely mischievous to all parties, and can do no good to Spaniards or Englishmen. And I hope you will do your best to stem the spirit with which it is encouraged in the daily press. I was glad to see the good sense in your paper, the *Manchester*

1848. *Examiner*, upon the subject, and equally sorry to observe
ÆT. 44. that our good friend, James Wilson, had been carried away by the current. I wrote to him from Madrid. I fear it is too much to expect any man to live in London in the atmosphere of the clubs and political cliques, and preserve the independent national tone in his paper, which we had hoped for in the *Economist*."[4]

Lord Palmerston's intervention in the affairs of Portugal was more active, and even more wantonly preposterous. All that Cobden said on this subject was literally true. The British fleet was kept in the Tagus for many months in order to protect the Queen of Portugal against her own subjects. What had England to gain? Portugal was one of the smallest, poorest, most decayed and abject of European countries. As for her commerce, said Cobden, if that is what you seek, you are sure of that, for the simple reason that you take four-fifths of all her port wine, and if you did not, no one else would drink it. Our statesmen, he went on, actually undertook to say who should govern Portugal, and they stipulated that the Cortes should be governed on constitutional principles. The Cortes was elected, and what happened? The people returned almost every man favourable to the very statesman who, as Lord Palmerston insisted, was to have no influence in Portugal.[5]

What Cobden heard from Bastiat made him all the more anxious to bring England round to a more sedate policy. The chief obstacles to the propagandism of Free Trade in France, said Bastiat, come from your side of the Channel.

[4] *To Mr. Bright.* Oct. 24, 1846.

[5] *Speeches*, i. 466. Jan. 27, 1848. See for the other side of the matter, Mr. Ashley's *Life of Lord Palmerston*, ii. 14—30. Lord Palmerston's reference (p. 16) to the anxiety and uneasiness of the Queen and the Prince Consort at Windsor shows, among many other proofs, how well-founded were Cobden's notions of the particular forces that were at work behind the policy of Intervention.

He was confronted by the fact that at the very time when Peel consummated the policy of Free Trade, he asked for an extra credit for the army, as if to proclaim, said Bastiat, that he had no faith in his own work, and as if to thrust back our best arguments down our own throats. Thirteen years afterwards, when Cobden was himself engaged in converting France to Free Trade, while Lord Palmerston was at the same moment increasing the fleet, raising new fortifications, and making incendiary speeches, Bastiat's words of 1847 may have come back to his mind: "Besides the extra credit, the policy of your government is still marked by a spirit of *taquinerie*, which irritates the French people, and makes it lose whatever impartiality it may have had left."[6] 1848. Æt. 44.

"I must speak to you in all frankness," Bastiat proceeded, in his urgent way. "In adopting Free Trade England has not adopted the policy that flows logically from Free Trade. Will she do so? I cannot doubt it, but when? The position taken by you and your friends in Parliament will have an immense influence on the course of our undertaking. If you energetically disarm your diplomacy, if you succeed in reducing your naval forces, we shall be strong. If not, what kind of figure shall we cut before our public? When we predict that Free Trade will draw English policy into the way of justice, peace, economy, colonial emancipation, France is not bound to take our word for it. There exists an inveterate mistrust of England, I will even say a sentiment of hostility, as old as the two names of *French* and *English*. Well, there are excuses for this sentiment. What is wrong is that it envelopes all your parties, and all your fellow-citizens in the same reprobation. But ought not nations to judge one another by external acts? They often say that we ought not to confound nations with their governments. There is some truth and some falsehood in this

[6] *Bastiat*, i. 152.

1848. maxim; and I venture to say that it is false as regards
ÆT. 44. nations that possess constitutional means of making *opinion* prevail. England ought to bring her political system into harmony with her new economic system."[7]

Cobden in reply seems to have treated this apprehension of English naval force, and the hostile use to which it might be put, as a device of the French Protectionists to draw attention from the true issue. No, answered Bastiat manfully; "I know my country; it sees that England is capable of crushing all the navies in the world; it knows that it is led by an oligarchy which has no scruples. That is what disturbs its sight, and hinders it from understanding Free Trade. I say more, that even if it did understand Free Trade, it would not care for it on account of its purely economic advantages. What you have to show it above all else is that freedom of exchange will cause the disappearance of those military perils which France apprehends. England ought seriously to disarm; spontaneously to drop her underground opposition to the unlucky Algerian conquest; and spontaneously to put an end to the dangers that grow out of the Right of Search."[8] When the revolution of 1848 came, Bastiat was more pressing than ever. France could not be the first to disarm; and if she did disarm, she would be drawn into war. England by her favoured position, was alone able to set the example. If she could only understand all this and act upon it, "she would save the future of Europe." Bastiat, however, was not long in awakening to the fact that not Protection but Socialism was now the foe that menaced France. He turned round with admirable versatility, and brought to bear on the new monster the same keen and patient scrutiny, the same skilful dexterity in reasoning and illustration, which had done such good service against the more venerable heresy. The pamphlets which he wrote between 1848 and

[7] *Bastiat to Cobden.* Oct. 15, 1847. [8] *Œuv.* i. 167—170.

1850 contain by much the most penetrating and effective examination that the great Socialist writers in France have ever received. 1848. Ær. 44.

This memorable year was an unfavourable moment for Cobden's projects, but the happy circumstance that Great Britain alone passed through the political cyclone without any thing more formidable than Mr. Smith O'Brien's insurrection in Ireland, and the harmless explosion of Chartism on Kennington Common, was too remarkable for men not to seek to explain it. The explanation that commended itself to most observers was that Free Trade had both mitigated the pressure of those economic evils which had provoked violent risings in other countries, and that, besides this, it had removed from the minds of the English workmen the sense that the government was oppressive, unjust, or indifferent to their wellbeing. "My belief is," said Sir Robert Peel, in a powerful speech which he made the following year, vindicating his commercial policy, "that you have gained the confidence and good will of a powerful class in this country by parting with that which was thought to be directly for the benefit of the landed interest. I think it was that confidence in the generosity and justice of Parliament, which in no small degree enabled you to pass triumphantly through the storm that convulsed other countries during the year 1848."[*]

The Protectionist party had not yet accepted defeat, nor did they finally accept it until they came into power in 1852. All through the year that intervened they turned nearly every debate into a Protectionist debate. After Lord George Bentinck's death in the autumn of 1848, they were led in the House of Commons by Mr. Disraeli, whose persistent and audacious patience was inspired by the seeming

[*] July 6, 1849. This comprehensive defence of Free Trade is well worth reading at the present day, when the same fallacies which Peel then exposed have come to life again.

1848. confidence that a Protectionist reaction was inevitable. The
ÆT. 44. reaction never came. The Navigation Laws, and protection on West Indian Sugar, followed the Corn Law. Free trade in corn was only the prelude to free trade in sugar and free trade in ships. But the interests died hard.[1] Even the landlords made tenacious efforts to get back, in the shape of specious readjustments of rates and taxes, something of what they believed that they were going to lose on their rents. Cobden remained in the forefront of this long controversy, though he was no longer one of the leaders of a forlorn hope.

The Irish famine and the Irish insurrection forced the minds of politicians of every colour to the tormenting problem to which Cobden had paid such profound attention on his first entry into public life. National Education, another of the sincerest interests of his earlier days, once more engaged him, and he found himself, as he had already done by his vote on the Maynooth grant, in antagonism to a large section of nonconformist politicians for whom in every other matter he had the warmest admiration. The following extracts from his correspondence show how he viewed these and other less important topics, as they came before him.

"*London, Feb.* 22, 1848. (*To Mrs. Cobden.*)—There seems to be a terrible storm brewing against the Whig budget. Unfortunately the outcry is rather against the mode of raising the money than the mode of expending it, and I do not sympathize with those who advocate armaments and then grumble at the cost. For my part I would make the influential classes pay the money, and then they will be more careful in the expenditure. I get a good many letters of support from all parts of the country, and some poetry, as you will see."

"*Feb.* 24.—Nothing is being talked about to-day but the *émeutes* in Paris. From the last accounts it seems that

[1] The Sugar Duties Bill became law in 1848, but the Navigation Act was not passed until the summer of 1849.

Louis Philippe has been obliged to give way and change his ministry owing to the troops and the national guards having shown signs of fraternizing with the people. By-and-by governments will discover that it is no use to keep large standing armies, as they cannot depend on them at a pinch. You are right in saying that the income tax has brought people to their senses. It is disgusting to see the same men who clamoured for armaments, now refusing to pay for them."

1848.
Ær. 44.

"*London, Feb.* 29. (*To George Combe.*)—These are stirring events in France. I am most anxious about our neutrality in the squabbles which will ensue on the Continent. I dread the revival of the Treaty of Vienna by our red-tapists, should France reach to the Rhine or come in collision with Austria or Russia. Besides, there is a great horror at the present changes in the minds of our Court and aristocracy. There will be a natural repugnance on the part of our Government, composed as it is entirely of the aristocracy, to go on cordially with a Republic, and it will be easy to find points of disagreement, when the will is ready for a quarrel. I know that the tone of the clubs and coteries of London is decidedly hostile, and there is an expectation in the same quarters that we shall have a war. It is striking to observe how little the views and feelings of the dominant class are in unison with those of the people at large. I agree with you that the republican form of government will put France to a too severe test. Yet it is difficult to see what other form will suit it. The people are too clever and active to submit to a despotism. All the props of a Monarchy, such as an aristocracy and State Church, are gone. After all a Republic is more in harmony than any other form with the manners of the people, for there is a strong passion for social equality in France. However, the duty of every man in England is to raise the cry for neutrality."[1]

[1] After the Revolution became Socialistic, Peel said the same:—"I believe

1848. "*March* 8. (*To Mrs. Cobden.*)—We are a little anxious up
ÆT. 44. here lest there should be riots in the north. We hear bad accounts from Glasgow, but I suppose they are exaggerated. I hope we shall have no imitations of the French fashions in this respect."

"*March* 10. („)—We were very late in the House again last night. Disraeli was very amusing for two hours, talking about everything but the question.[3] He made poor McGregor a most ridiculous figure. The Whigs are getting hold of our friends.

"*London, March* 14. („)—On getting back yesterday I found such a mass of letters that, what with them and the committee I had to attend, and callers, and my speech last evening, I thought you would excuse my writing to you. I am more harassed than ever. The committees are very important (I mean upon army, navy, and ordnance expenditure,[4] and upon the Bank of England), and occupy my time more than the House. I gave them some home truths last evening, but we were in a poor minority.[5] The Ministers frightened our friends about a resignation. Nobody did more to canvass for help for them than ———.

it to be essential to the peace of the world and to the stability of government, that the experiment now making in France shall have a fair trial without being embarrassed or obstructed by extrinsic intervention. Let us wait for the results of this experiment. Let us calmly contemplate whether it is possible that executive governments can be great manufacturers, whether it can be possible for them to force capital to employ industry," &c.—Sir Robert Peel, April 18.

[3] Among other points he laughed at Cobden and Mr. Bright as representatives of Peace and Plenty in the face of a starving people and a world in arms. He also declared himself a "Free-trader, not a freebooter of the Manchester school."

[4] As a means of conciliating public opinion, which was at this time in one of its cold and thrifty fits, Sir Charles Wood, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, moved for a Select and Secret Committee to inquire into the expenditure on army, navy, and ordnance. Cobden was an assiduous attendant, with his usual anxiety to hear all the facts of the case.

[5] On Mr. Hume's motion for altering the period of renewed income-tax from three years to one. The "poor minority" was 138 against 363.

He is far more to be blamed than Gibson, who is thoroughly with us in heart, and only votes with the Government because he is one of them. The electors ought to make allowance for him. He is a very good fellow, and it is a great pity that he ever joined the Whigs. There are many men on our side upon whom I relied, who went over to the Government, very much to my disgust. There are uncommonly few to be trusted in this atmosphere. Don't be alarmed. I am not going to set up any new League. It is a mistake of the newspapers."

"*March* 18. („)—We have had incessant rain here for several days, and I have been thinking with some apprehension of its effects upon the grain in the ground, and upon the operations of the farmers in getting in their seed. To-day, however, it is a fine clear day, and I am going with Porter[6] at four o'clock down to Wimbledon to stay till Monday. This week's work has nearly knocked me up. They talk of a ten hours bill in Paris. I wish we had a twelve hours bill, for I am at it from nine in the morning till midnight. We had a debate last evening upon the question of applying the income tax to Ireland, but I was shut out of the division, the door being closed in my face just as I was entering, otherwise I should have voted for the measure.[7] The news from Paris is more and more exciting. There seems to be a sort of reaction of the moderate party against the violent men. The Bank of France has suspended specie payments, which will lead to much mischief and confusion. I fear we have not seen the worst."

"*London, March* 21. („)—I have sent you a *Times* containing a report of my speech last night. Be good

[6] The author of Porter's *Progress of the Nation*.

[7] Moved by Sir B. Hall, opposed by the Government, and rejected by 218 to 138.

1848. enough to return it to me after you have read it, as I shall
ÆT. 44. want to correct it for Hansard, and have not another copy. We were in a miserable minority.[a] The blue jackets and red coats were down upon me fiercely, as if I had been attacking them sword in hand. It reminded me of the old times when we were just beginning the Anti-Corn-law battle in the House. We get astounding news from the continent; a fresh revolution or a dethronement by every post."

"*March* 27. („)—You need not be alarmed about my turning up right in the end, but at the present time I am not very fashionable in aristocratic circles. However, I have caught Admiral Dundas in a trap. You may remember that he contradicted me about my fact of a large ship lying at anchor so long at Malta. Well, a person has called upon me, and given me the minute particulars and dates of the times which all the admirals have been lying in Malta harbour during the last twelve years, extracted by him from the ship logs which are lying at Somerset House. Having got the particulars, I have given notice to Admiral Dundas that I shall move in the House for the official return of them to be extracted from the ships' logs. He says I shan't have the returns, but he can't deny that I *have* got them. I shall make a stir in the House, and turn the tables upon him. Whilst I was talking to the Admiral about it to-day in the committee room, Molesworth entered into the altercation with so much warmth that I thought there would have been an affair between them. The best of it all is, that I find the present Admiral in the Mediterranean (Sir William Parker), who sent such an insolent message to me about my speech at Manchester, which was read by Dundas in the House, has been lying himself for seven months and two days in

[a] Debate on Navy estimates; amendment for reduction of the force, defeated by 347 to 38.

Malta harbour with nearly 1000 hands, without ever stirring out of port."

"*London, April* 10. („)—We have been all in excitement here with the Chartist meeting at Kennington Common, which after all has gone off very quietly, and does not appear to have been so numerously attended as was expected. In my opinion the Government and the newspapers have made far too much fuss about it. From all that I can learn there were not so many as 40,000 persons present, and they dispersed quietly. I do not think I shall be able to go north with you before next Monday week."

"*April* 15. („)—You will have seen by the paper what a mess Feargus O'Connor has made of the Chartist petition. The poor dupes who have followed him are quite disheartened and disgusted, and ought to be so. They are now much more disposed to go along with the middle class."

"*May* 13. („)—You will hear that all the papers are down upon me again. In making a few remarks about the Alien Bill, I said that the 'best way to repel republicanism was to curtail some of the barbarous splendour of the Monarchy which went to the aggrandizement of the aristocracy.' My few words drew up Lord John as usual, and he was followed by Bright with a capital speech."

"*Manchester, April* 24. (*To G. Combe.*)—You know how cordially I agree with you upon the subject of Education. But I confess I see no chance of incorporating it in any new movement for an extension of the suffrage. The main strength of any such movement must be in the Liberal ranks of the middle class, and they are almost exclusively filled by Dissenters. To attempt to raise the question of National Education amongst them at the present moment, would be to throw a bombshell into their ranks to disperse them. In my opinion every extension of popular rights will bring us nearer to a plan of National Education, because it will

1848. ÆT. 44. give the poor a stronger motive to educate their children, and at the same time a greater power to carry the motive into practice. The real obstacle to a system of National Education has been in my opinion the State Church, and although the Dissenters are for the moment in a false position, they will, I hope, with time come right."

"*May* 15. („)—There is no active feeling at present in favour of National Education. The Dissenters, at least Baines's section, who have been the only movement party since the League was dissolved, have rather turned popular opinion against it.* I need not say how completely I agree with you that education alone can ensure good self-government. Don't suppose that I am changed, or that I intend to shirk the question. Above all, don't suspect that sitting for Yorkshire would shut my mouth. I made up my mind, on returning from the Continent, that the best chance I could give to our dissenting friends was to give them time to cool after the excitement of the late Opposition to the Government measure, and therefore I have avoided throwing the topic in their faces. But I do not intend to preserve my silence much longer. If I take a part in a new reform movement, I shall do my best to connect the Education question with it, not as a part of the new Reform act, but by proclaiming my own convictions that it is by a national system of education alone that people can acquire or retain knowledge enough for self-government. In our reform movement, sectarianism will not be predominant."

"*London, July* 23. („)—What a wretched session has this been! It ought to be expunged from the minutes of

* See above, vol. i., p. 300. "I confess," said Cobden, in 1851, "that for fifteen years my hopes of success in establishing a system of National Education, have always been associated with the idea of coupling the education of the country with the religious communities which exist." But he found religious discordances too violent, and he took refuge, as we shall presently see, in the secular system.

Parliament. Three Coercion Bills for Ireland and the rest talk, talk, talk. There never was a Parliament in which so much power for good or evil was in the hands of the Minister as in this. Lord John could have commanded a majority for any judicious Liberal measures by the aid of Peel, who was bound to support him, and the Liberals, who were eager to be led forward. But he has allowed himself to be baffled, bullied, and obstructed by Lord George Bentinck and the Protectionists, who have been so far encouraged by their success in Sugar and the Navigation Laws that I expect they will be quite ready to begin their reaction on Corn next session, and we may have to fight the Free Trade battle over again. The feebleness and incapacity of the Whigs are hardly sufficient to account for their failures as administrators. The fact is they are the allies of the aristocracy rather than of the people, and they fight their opponents with gloves, not meaning to hurt them. They are buffers placed between the people and the privileged classes, to deaden the shock when they are brought into collision."

"*May* 15. (*To Mr. W. R. Greg.*)—No apology is, I assure you, necessary for your frank and friendly letter. There is not much difference in our views as to what is most wanted for the country. The only great point upon which we do not agree is as to the means. What we want before all things is a bold retrenchment of expenditure. I may take a too one-sided view of the matter, but I consider nine-tenths of all our future dangers to be *financial,* and when I came home from the continent, it was with a determination to go on with fiscal reform and economy as a sequence to Free Trade. I urged this line upon our friend James Wilson (who, by the way, has committed political suicide), and others, and I did not hesitate to say up to within the last three months that I would take no active part in agitating for

1848. organic questions. But when the series of political revolu-
ÆT. 44. tions broke out on the Continent, all men's minds in England were suddenly turned to similar topics; and the political atmosphere became so charged with the electric current, that it was no longer possible to avoid discussing organic questions. But I had no share in forcing forward the subject. I abstained from assisting in forming a party in the House for organic reforms, though I was much urged by a great number of members to head such a party."

"*July* 21. (*To H. Ashworth.*)—No man can defend or palliate such conduct as that of Smith O'Brien and his confederates. It would be a mercy to shut them up in a lunatic asylum. They are not seeking a repeal of the legislative union, but the establishment of a Republic, or probably the restoration of the Kings of Munster and Connaught! But the sad side of the picture is in the fact that we are doing nothing to satisfy the moderate party in Ireland, nothing which strengthens the hands even of John O'Connell and the priest party, who are opposed to the 'red republicans' of the Dublin clubs. There seems to be a strong impression here that this time there is to be a rebellion in Ireland. But I confess I have ceased to fear or hope anything from that country. Its utter helplessness to do anything for itself is our great difficulty. You can't find three Irishmen who will co-operate together for any rational object."

"*London, August* 28. (*To George Combe.*)—I would have answered your first letter from Ireland, but did not know how soon you were going back again to Edinburgh. With respect to the plan for holding sectional meetings of the House of Commons in Dublin, Edinburgh, and London for local purposes, it is too fanciful for my practical taste. I do not think that such a scheme will ever seriously engage the public attention. If local business be ever got rid of by the House of Commons, it should be transferred

as much as possible to County courts. There is very little advantage for instance in carrying a road bill from Ross-shire to Edinburgh instead of to London, or from Galway to Dublin instead of to London. The private or local business occupies much less of the time of the House of Commons than many people suppose. An hour on an average at the opening of the sittings daily suffices; the rest is all done in select Committees, and a great deal of it by Mr. Green and Mr. Bernal, Chairmen of Committees, who, I suspect, would find it no advantage in Irish matters to be in Dublin. Bad as the system is of bringing to the House of Commons all the local business of the kingdom, I am sure it would not mend the matter to split us into three sections, as your friends propose, for two or three months, and then to reunite in London for imperial purposes. We should be in perpetual session.

"Whilst we are constitution-tinkering, let me give you my plan. Each county to have its assembly elected by the people, to do the work which the unpaid magistrates and lords-lieutenant now do, and also much of the local business which now comes before Parliament. The head of this body, or rather the head of each county, to be the executive chief, partaking of the character of prefect, or governor of a state in the United States. By-and-by when you require to change the constitution of the House of Lords, these county legislators may each elect two senators to an upper chamber or senate.

"But the question is about Ireland. Why do your friends amuse one another with such bubble-blowing? The real difficulty in Ireland is the character and condition socially and morally of the people, from the peer to the Connaught peasant. It is not by forms of legislation or the locality of parliaments, but by a change and improvement of the population, that Ireland is to have a start in the

1848. Æt. 44. career of civilization and self-government. Now instead of phantom-hunting, why don't your friends (if they are worthy of being your friends) tell the truth to their countrymen, and teach them their duties as well as their rights? And let them begin by showing that they understand their own duties and act up to them. The most discouraging thing to an English Member of Parliament who wishes to do well to Ireland, is the quality of the men sent to represent it in the House of Commons. Hardly a man of business amongst them; and not three who are prepared cordially to co-operate together for any one common object. How would it mend matters if such men were sitting in Dublin instead of London? But the subject is boundless and hopeless, and I must not attempt to discuss it in a note."

"*Hayling Island, Hants, Oct.* 4. („)—Many thanks for your valuable letters upon Ireland and Germany. I really feel much indebted for your taking all these pains for my instruction.

"Leaving Germany—upon which I do not presume to offer an opinion beside yours—I do claim for myself the justice of having foreseen the danger in Ireland, or rather seen it —for its condition has little altered since I first began to reason. When about fourteen years ago I first found leisure from my private affairs to think about public business, I summed up my views of English politics in a pamphlet which contained many crude details (which I should not now print), but upon whose three broad propositions I have never changed my opinion. They were—First, that the great curse of our policy has been our love of intervention in foreign politics; secondly, that our greatest home difficulty is Ireland; and thirdly, that the United States is the great *economical* rival which will rule the destiny of England.

"It may appear strange that a man who had thought much about Ireland, and who had frequently been in that country (I had a cousin, a rector of the Church of England in Tipperary), should have been seven years in Parliament and not have spoken upon Irish questions. I will tell you the reason. I found the populace of Ireland represented in the House by a body of men, with O'Connell at their head, with whom I could feel no more sympathy or identity than with people whose language I did not understand. In fact, *morally* I felt a complete antagonism and repulsion towards them. O'Connell always treated me with friendly attention, but I never shook hands with him or faced his smile without a feeling of insecurity; and as for trusting him on any public question where his vanity or passions might interpose, I should have as soon thought of an alliance with an Ashantee chief.[1] I found that that which I regarded as the great Irish grievance—the Protestant Church Establishment—was never mentioned by the Irish Liberal members. Their Repeal cry was evidently an empty sound.

"The great obstacle to all progress both in Ireland and in England is the landlord spirit, which is dominant in political and social life. It is this spirit which prevents our dealing with the question of the tenure of land. The feudal system, as now maintained in Ireland, is totally unsuited to the state of the country. In fact, the feudal policy is not carried out, for that would imply a responsibility on the part of the proprietor to keep and employ the people, whereas he is possibly living in Paris, whilst his agent is driving the peasantry from his estate and perhaps burning their cabins. What is wanting is a tribunal or legislature before which the case of Ireland may be pleaded, where the landlord spirit (excuse the repetition of the word) is not

[1] Cobden is here unjust to O'Connell. He opposed the Corn Bill of 1815, and was true to the League in the fight from 1838 to 1846.

1848. supreme. This is not to be found in our House of Commons.
ÆT. 44. You would be astonished if behind the scenes in the Committees, and in the confidence of those men who frame bills for Parliament, to observe how vigilant the spirit of landlordism is in guarding its privileges, and how much the legislator who would hope to carry a measure through both Houses, is obliged to consult its sovereign will and pleasure. Hence the difficulty of dealing with game laws, copyholds, and such small matters, which grow into things of mighty import in the House of Commons, whilst the law of primogeniture is a sort of eleventh commandment in the eyes of our legislators.

"I think I know what is wanted in Ireland: a redistribution of land, as the only means of multiplying men of property. If I had absolute power I would instantly issue an edict applying the law of succession as it exists in France to the land of Ireland. There should be no more absentee proprietors drawing large rentals from Ireland, if I could prevent it. I would so divide the property as to render it necessary to live upon the spot to look after it. But you can do nothing effectual in that direction with our Houses, and therefore I am an advocate for letting in the householders as voters, so as to take away the domination of the squires. But I will do all in my power in the meantime to give a chance to Ireland, and I cordially agree with your views upon the policy that ought to be pursued towards it."

"*London, Oct.* 28. („)—I have to thank you for the *Scotsman* containing the whole of your observations upon the state of Ireland, in every syllable of which I agree with you. But excuse me if I say I miss in your articles, as in all other dissertations upon Ireland, a specific *plan*—I mean such a remedial scheme as might be embodied in an Act of Parliament. And it must be so from the very nature of the

case, for the ills of Ireland are so complex, and its diseases so decidedly chronic, that no single remedy could possibly cure them. Indeed, if we were to apply a thousand remedies, the existing generation could hardly hope to live to see any great change in the condition of the Irish people; and this is probably one reason why politicians and ministers of the day do not commit their fortunes to the cause of justice to Ireland. 1848. Æt. 44.

"I have but one plan, but I don't know how to enforce it, Cut up the land into small properties. Let there be no estates so large as to favour absenteeism, even from the parish. How is this to be done, with feudalism still in the ascendant in Parliament and in the Cabinet? Pim is quite right when he draws the distinction between the case of Ireland, where the conquerors have not amalgamated with the conquered, and that of other countries, where the victors and vanquished have been invariably blended. For we are all conquered nations—some of us have been so repeatedly—but all, with the exception of Ireland, have absorbed their conquerors.

"Almost every crime and outrage in Ireland is connected with the occupation or ownership of land; and yet the Irish are not naturally an agricultural people, for they alone, of all the European emigrants who arrive in the United States, linger about the towns, and hesitate to avail themselves of the tempting advantages of the rural districts in the interior. But in Ireland, at least the south and west, there is no property but the soil, and no labour but upon the land, and you cannot reach the population in their material or moral condition but through the proprietorship of the land. Therefore, if I had the power, I would always make the proprietors of the soil resident, by breaking up the large properties. In other words, I would give Ireland to the Irish.

1848. Æt. 44. "I used to think that the Protestant Church was the crying evil in Ireland; and so it would be, if the Catholics of that country were Englishmen or Scots. But as an economical evil, it can hardly be said to affect the material condition of the people, seeing that the titheowners live in the parish, and are in many cases almost the only proprietors who do spend their income creditably at home; and as it is not felt apparently as a moral grievance, I do not think that the agitation against the Church Establishment would be likely to contribute to the contentment of the people. I confess that the apathy of the Irish Catholics upon the subject of the Protestant Church Establishment in that country excites my surprise, if not my contempt."

"*Dec.* 28. (*To Mr. Edward Baines.*)—I doubt the utility of your recurring to the Education question. My views have undergone no change for twenty years on the subject, excepting that they are infinitely strengthened, and I am convinced that I am as little likely to convert you as you me. Practically no good could come out of the controversy; for we must both admit that the *principle* of State Education is virtually settled, both here and in all civilized countries. It is not an infallible test I admit, but I don't think there are two men in the House of Commons who are opposed to the principle of National Education.

"I did not intend to touch upon a matter so delicate; but yet, upon second thoughts, it is best to be candid. My experience in public matters has long ago convinced me that to form a party, or act with a party, it is absolutely necessary to avoid seeking for points of collision, and on the contrary, to endeavour to be silent, as far as one can be so conscientiously, upon the differences one may see between his own opinions and those of his political allies. Applying this to your observations[1] upon my budget, I

[1] In the *Leeds Mercury*.

would have laid on heavily in favour of such parts as I could agree with, and would have deferred pointing out any errors until I had given the common enemy time to do that (I say errors, but I do not admit them in this case). The same remark applies to the course the *Mercury* took upon the redistribution of electoral power, on which occasion it was to my mind demonstratively wrong in abandoning and turning against the strongest position of the Reformers. I do not press the Education question, because I presume your religious feelings were excited by the course the Government took whilst I was on the Continent. But I suppose all parties agree that education is the main cause of the split amongst the middle-class Liberals. Now, what I say to you I have always preached to others. For instance, I have been trying to persuade everybody about the *Daily News*, as to the impolicy, to say nothing of the injustice, of their gross attacks upon yourself and friends, and I have used precisely the same argument which I now use to you."

"*Manchester, Nov.* 30. (*To Mrs. Cobden.*)—I find our League friends here very lukewarm about the West Riding election.[3] Many of them declare they will not vote. They seem quite out of humour with the religious intolerance of the Eardley party. I am very much inclined to think the Tories will win. Have you seen the news from Paris? Lamoriciere, the French Minister of War, has proposed to the Assembly to reduce the army nearly one half, and to save 170 millions of francs. This, if really carried out, will make our work safe in this country."

"*Manchester, Dec.* 8. („)—I went down to Liverpool on Wednesday afternoon, and dined at Mellor's with a large

[3] Lord Morpeth, Cobden's colleague in the representation, now succeeded to the earldom of Carlisle. A contest took place, and Mr. Denison, the Conservative, defeated Sir Culling Eardley.

1848. party of the leading men, including Brown and Lawrence
ÆT. 44. Heyworth, and slept there. Yesterday I met the Financial Reformers at their Council Board, Mr. Robertson Gladstone in the chair. They seem to be earnest men, but I did not exactly see the man capable of directing so great an undertaking. They approved of my plan of a budget, and I agreed to address a letter with it to their chairman for publication. Last evening I met another party of the more earnest men of the Reform Association, at Mellor's."

The last extract refers to the subject which Cobden had now taken earnestly in hand. As he was always repeating, extravagant and ill-adjusted finance seemed to him the great mischief of our policy. Apart from its place in his general scheme, retrenchment was Cobden's device for meeting the cry of the Protectionists. It was an episode in the long battle against the enemies of Free Trade. The landed interest, they cried out, was ruined by rates and taxes. The implication was that they could not exist without Protection. That was Mr. Disraeli's cue until he became Chancellor of the Exchequer. He made speech after speech and motion after motion to this effect. Cobden with equal persistency retorted that the proper relief for agriculture was not the imposition of a burden upon the consumers of bread, but a reduction of the common burdens of them all. He had begun his campaign in the session of 1848. The Government came forward with a proposal, which was afterwards ignominiously withdrawn, for an increase in the income tax. Cobden broke new ground by insisting on the superior expediency of direct over indirect taxation, provided that a just distinction were recognized between permanent and precarious incomes. His chief point was that the Government must either increase direct taxation, or else reduce expenditure; and he pressed the inference that

expenditure must be decreased, and it must be decreased by reduction in armaments. 1848. ÆT. 44.

Cobden's contention cannot be said to have prospered; but the debates show how seriously his attack on expenditure was taken by those who opposed him. Mr. Disraeli laughed at him as the successor of the Abbé St. Pierre, Rousseau, and Robespierre in the dreams of perpetual peace, but he recognized the possibility of public opinion being brought round to Cobden's side. Even Peel thought it necessary formally to express his dissent from Cobden's views on national defence. Fresh from his victorious onslaught upon the Corn Law, he was dreaded by the House of Commons and the old political factions, as speaking the voice of an irresistible, if not an infallible, oracle. The Government had no root. The Opposition was nullified by the internecine quarrel between the Protectionists and the Peelites. The two parties in fact were so distracted, so uncertain in principle, and so unstable in composition, that they were profoundly afraid of the one party which knew its own mind and stood aloof from the conventional game. The Conservatives constantly felt, or pretended to feel, an irrational apprehension that the object of the Manchester school was, in the exaggerated language of one of them, to organize a force that should override the legislature and dictate to the House of Commons. The Financial Reform Association at Liverpool, with which Cobden had entered into relations, was expected to imitate the redoubtable achievements of the League. Similar associations sprang up both in the English and the Scotch capitals, and there was on many sides a stir and movement on the subject which for a time promised substantial results.

In a letter to Mr. Bright, Cobden sketched an outline of what was called a People's Budget, already referred to in his letter to Mr. Baines:—

1848. ÆT. 44. "*London, Nov.* 16, 1848.—I have been thinking and talking about concocting a 'national budget,' to serve for an object for financial reformers to work up to, and to prevent their losing their time upon vague generalities. The plan must be one to unite all classes and interests, and to bring into one agitation the counties and the towns. I propose to reduce the army, navy, and ordnance from 18,500,000*l.* to 10,000,000*l.*, and thus save 8,500,000*l.* Upon the civil expenditure in all its branches, including the cost of collecting revenue, and the management of crown lands, I propose to save 1,500,000*l.* I propose to lay a probate and legacy duty upon real property, to affect both entailed and unentailed estates, by which would be got 1,500,000*l.* Here is 11,500,000*l.*, to be used in reducing and abolishing duties, which I propose to dispose of as follows:—

"*Customs:*

"Tea, reduce duty to 1*s.* per lb.

"Wood and timber, abolish duties.

"Butter and cheese, do.

"Upwards of 100 smaller articles of the tariff to be abolished. (I would only leave about fifteen articles in the tariff paying customs duties.)

"*Excise:*

"Malt, all duty abolished.

"Paper, do. do.

"Soap, do. do.

"Hops, do. do.

"Window tax, all off.

"Advertisement duty, do.

"All these changes could be effected with 11,500,000*l.*

"There are other duties which I should prefer to remove, instead of one or two of them, but I have been guided materially by a desire to bring all interests to sympathize with the scheme. Thus the tea is to catch the merchants

and all the old women in the country—the wood and timber, the shipbuilders—the malt and hops, the farmers—paper and soap, the Scotch anti-excise people—the window-tax, the shopocracy of London, Bath, etc.—the advertisements, the press."

The scheme which Cobden here propounds to Mr. Bright, was elaborated in a speech made at Liverpool and afterwards set forth in a letter to the Financial Reform Association of that town, which led to much discussion, but which for reasons that we shall see in the next chapter did not become the starting-point of such an agitation as Cobden promised himself.

CHAPTER XX.

MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE ON SOCIAL AND POLITICAL MOVEMENTS.

1849.
ÆT. 45.

BEHIND the merits of a policy of economy for its own sake, there was in the minds both of Cobden and of Mr. Bright and others, a general scheme for gathering up the strength of the Liberal party. The extraordinary state of the old combinations in the House of Commons was a standing incentive to such efforts as were now made in the north of England. There was to be a popular party, based on real principles and a practical programme, as distinguished from factitious catchwords and insincere cries invented for parliamentary occasions. A great association might perhaps be formed, and it was suggested that it should be called the Commons League. Financial Reform and Parliamentary Reform were the two planks of the platform. At a great meeting in Manchester in the second week of the new year, Cobden explained his ideas on the first, and Mr. Bright followed with a demand for the second. Cobden believed that the parts about financial reform were better received than the parts about parliamentary reform, even by the men in fustian jackets.[1] Meetings were held in other towns in the north; and the two champions were everywhere received with unbounded cordiality. Circulars were sent out from Manchester for the formation of the new association, and between three and four thousand adhe-

[1] *Letter to Mrs. Cobden*, Jan. 10, 1849.

sions were received. But the new League did not grow. The leaders hardly seemed to know what it was that they wished to do. They were not sure in their tactics. Cobden thought that it ought to be a metropôlitan association. Mr. Bright on the contrary believed that Lancashire and Yorkshire must be its centre. The scheme of the association was ambiguous. "We are asking people," said Mr. Bright, "to join for an undefined or ill-defined object, and we neither propose an end to the movement, nor a clear and open way for working it." The two chiefs were not exactly of one mind as to the true policy in the most important part of the programme. Cobden, as we have so often said, was essentially an economical, a moral, and a social reformer. He was never an enthusiast for mere reform in the machinery. Immediately after the repeal of the Corn Law, he confessed that on the question of the suffrage he had gone back. "And yet," he went on, "I am something like Peel and Free Trade. I do not oppose the principle of giving men a control over their own affairs. I must confess, however, that I am less sanguine than I used to be about the effects of a wide extension of the franchise."[1] His own favourite plan of extension through the forty shilling freeholder only recommended itself to him because it brought with it the virtue of thrift, and the recommendation of property. Mr. Bright, though cordially acquiescing in the plan so far as it went, and as a means of bringing the old factions to a capitulation in some of the counties, always maintained that it would never enfranchise so many voters permanently as to make any real and effective change in the representation. Both before and after the League was dissolved, Mr. Bright insisted that "no object was worth a real and great effort, short of a thorough reform in Parliament." Although, however, there was not a sufficiently clear and concentrated unanimity to give an impulse to a new League, there was

[1] *To Mr. Sturge*, July 16, 1846.

1849. abundant room for strenuous co-operation in the work about
ÆT. 45. which they were cordially agreed.

The following letter written to Mr. Bright at the close of 1848, two or three weeks before the meeting at Manchester, shows the point of view to which Cobden inclined, and to what extent,—and it was not great,—he differed from Mr. Bright:—

"*Dec.* 23, 1848.—Since writing to you, I have again read and reflected upon your letter. You say that the object of our meeting must be specific and general; that I must speak upon Finance, and you follow upon Parliamentary Reform; and that then a society must be organized for a general registration to carry out, I presume, both objects. I thought we had always agreed that to carry the public along with us, we should have a single and well-defined object. It is decidedly my opinion. If Parliamentary Reform were the sole object, we might after a long time probably succeed; but the two things together would be a false start, and it must end in our taking to one or the other exclusively. It is true that we joined them together in our meeting of Members of Parliament at the Free Trade Club, and that was because we did not feel ourselves on the strongest ground with the middle class even then, without the Expenditure question, and it is vastly more so now. Besides, you will admit that we could not ignore the existence of the Liverpool movement. However defective in men and money at present, they are in as good a position as we were a year after the League was formed; and they have far more hold upon the public mind than we had even after three years' agitation. I rather think that you do not fully appreciate the extent to which the country is sympathizing with the Liverpool movement. But taking the fact to be as I have stated it, that the movement is for Financial Reform, and nobody can deny it, I am half disposed to think that

it is the most useful agitation we could enter upon. The people want information and instruction upon armaments, colonies, taxation, and so forth. There is a fearful mass of prejudice and ignorance to dispel upon these subjects, and whilst these exist, you may get a reform of Parliament, but you will not get a reformed policy.

"I believe there is as much clinging to colonies at the present moment amongst the middle class as among the aristocracy; and the working people are not wiser than the rest. And as respects armaments, I do not forget that last December [1847] hardly a Liberal paper in the kingdom supported me in resisting the attempt to add to our forces. Such papers as the *Sun*, *Weekly Despatch*, *Sunday Times*, and *Liverpool Mercury*, went dead against me; and all that I could say for the rest is that they were silent. Now all these questions can be discussed most favourably in reference to the expenditure. You may reason ever so logically, but never so convincingly as through the pocket. But it will take time even to play off John Bull's acquisitiveness against his combativeness. He will not be easily persuaded that all his reliance upon brute force and courage has been a losing speculation. Already I have heard from good Liberals an expression of fear that, in my Budget, I have 'gone too far.' But I have said enough.

"And now, having stated my view of what the object must be, a word or two as to the *modus operandi*. And here we do not differ. I am for going at once to the registers and the forty shilling qualifications. Begin where the League left off, and avow it boldly. Nay, make it a condition, if you like, of your alliance with Liverpool that such shall be the plan. And I put it to you and Wilson, whether you think that the men who go with us for the Budget and direct taxation, will not be likely to use their votes for a reform of Parliament. I should feel very little doubt about getting nearly as much

1849. strength for the one question as the other, by merely getting
ÆT. 45. people to register and qualify for retrenchment and direct taxation. Besides, I have no objection to our advocating Reform, whilst advocating economy. I should myself do so. I would say—We may cut down the expenditure, as we did in 1835; but it will grow up again, as it has since, unless either the agitation were perpetual, or the Parliament were reformed. I have no objection to this line of argument. I object only to our separating ourselves from Liverpool in our organization.

"And now I think I know the feeling of the majority of the influential money-givers in Manchester, and I feel convinced that they would all give their 10*l.* more heartily for my plan than any other. It would at once put Wilson, you, and me in a pure and disinterested light before their eyes. We should not be open to even the shade of a suspicion of wishing to arrogate to ourselves any separate line, or to use them as our party, or to make Manchester needlessly the focus of a central agitation. You would have far more strength upon the platform for my object than any other. I have only room to add—advertise a meeting to co-operate with Liverpool in Financial Reform, and make any use you like of my name. . . . . I have a good opinion of Paulton's judgment. Not a word has passed between us on this subject; but I wish you would let him read my letters, and ask him to give a candid opinion on the matter in discussion."

Before the session began, he took part along with Mr. Bright in a ceremony of joyful commemoration. Peel's measure of 1846 provided that the duty on corn should expire at the end of three years (see vol. i. p. 355). The day arrived on the first of February, 1849. On the evening of the thirty-first of January a gathering was held in the great hall at Manchester. Speeches were made and choruses were sung until midnight. When twelve o'clock

sounded, the assembly broke out in loud and long-sustained cheers to welcome the dawn of the day which had at last brought Free Trade in corn. Free Trade in its turn had brought new causes for which to fight. Cobden never swerved from his maxim that he could only do one thing at a time; but his activity during the session of 1849 included in the same effort not only reduced armaments, reduced expenditure, and re-adjusted taxation, but the more delicate subject of international arbitration. 1849. Ær. 45.

"*London, Jan.* 5, 1849. (*To G. Combe.*)—I hope you will not think there is any inconsistency in the strong declaration I made at the meeting, of the paramount importance of the question of Education, and my apparent present inactivity in the matter. Owing to the split in the Liberal party, caused by Baines, it would be impossible for me to make it the leading political subject at this moment. Time is absolutely necessary to ripen it, but in the interim there are other topics which will take the lead in spite of any efforts to prevent it, reduction of expenditure being the foremost; and all I can promise myself is that any influence I may derive now from my connexion with the latter or any other movement, shall at the fitting opportunity be all brought to bear in favour of National Education. To confess the truth, I can only do one thing at a time. Here am I now put in a prominent position upon the most complex of all public questions, the national finances, and next session I shall be perhaps more the object of attack, and my budget more the subject of criticism, than the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his financial measures. For all this I am obliged to prepare myself by studying the dry details of official papers, and reading Hansard from 1815 to the present day, whilst at the same time I am in a daily treadmill of letter-writing, for every man having a crotchet upon finance, or a grievance however trifling, is inundating me with his correspondence. I can't help it, though I believe I am shortening my days by following

1849. strictly the rule 'whatever thou doest, do with all thy heart.'
ÆT. 45. You know that of old I have felt a strong sentiment upon the subject of warlike armaments and war. It is this moral sentiment, more than the *£ s. d.* view of the matter, which impels me to undertake the advocacy of a reduction of our forces. It was a kindred sentiment (more than the material view of the question) which actuated me on the Corn Law and Free Trade question. It would enable me to die happy if I could feel the satisfaction of having in some degree contributed to the partial disarmament of the world."

"*Feb.* 8. („)—I hasten to reply to your kind inquiries about my budget. In a day or two I intend to give notice of a motion declaratory of the expediency of reducing the expenditure to the amount of 1835. The terms of my resolution will be to reduce the expenditure '*with all practicable speed.*'[1] I am too practical a man of business to think that it can be done in one session. But I will raise the question of our financial system with a view to save ten millions, and that will arrest public interest in a way which no nibbling at details would do. In less than five years all that I propose, and a great deal more, will be accomplished.

"I say I am too practical to think that the reduction of ten millions can be made in a session, because the changes in our distant colonies will take time. But these changes ought to be set about at once. For instance, we have an army as large in Canada and the other North-American Colonies as that of the United States. Yet under the *régime* of Free Trade, Canada is not a whit more ours than is the

[1] The motion was brought forward on February 26, and was to the effect that the net expenditure had risen by ten millions between 1835 and 1848; that the increase had been caused principally by defensive armaments; that it was not warranted, while the taxes required to meet it lessened the funds applicable to productive industry; and that therefore it was expedient to reduce the annual expenditure with all practicable speed to the amount of 1835. The division went against Cobden's motion by a majority of 197 only 78 going into the lobby with the mover.

great Republic. To keep that force in the North-American Colonies at the expense of the tax-payers of this country, is precisely the same drain upon our resources as if the Government of the United States could levy a contribution upon us for the pay and subsistence of its army. The same may be said of our army in Australia, New Zealand, etc.; and if we do not draw in our horns, this country, with all its wealth, energy, and resources, will sink under the weight of its extended empire." 1849. Ær. 45.

"*April* 9. („)—Did this subject ever come under your notice? I have lying before me a return of all the barracks in the United Kingdom, the date of their erection, their size, etc. It is to me one of the most discouraging and humiliating documents I am acquainted with. Almost every considerable town has it barracks. They have nearly all been erected since 1790, before which date they were hardly known, and were denounced with horror by such men as Chatham, Fox, etc. By far the most extensive establishments have been erected during the last twenty-five years. I speak of Great Britain. As for Ireland, it is studded over with barracks like a permanent encampment. I need not enlarge upon the direct moral evils of such places. One fact is enough: real property always falls in value in the vicinity of barracks. A prison or a cemetery is a preferable neighbour. But you will also see at a glance that this increase of barracks is the outward and visible sign of the increased discontent of the mass of the people, and the growing alarm of the governing classes. It argues great injustice on one side or ignorance on the other, perhaps both. The expense is too obvious to require comment. And where is this to end? Either we must change our system—give the people a voice in the government, and qualify the rising generation to exercise the rights of freemen,—or we shall follow the fate of the Continent, and end in a convulsion.

1849. "You seem to be puzzled about my motion in favour of
ÆT. 45. international arbitration. Perhaps you have mixed it up with other theories to which I am no party. My plan does not embrace the scheme of a congress of nations, or imply the belief in the millennium, or demand your homage to the principles of non-resistance. I simply propose that England should offer to enter into an agreement with other countries, France, for instance, binding them to refer any dispute that may arise to arbitration. I do not mean to refer the matter to another sovereign power, but that each party should appoint plenipotentiaries in the form of commissioners, with a proviso for calling in arbitrators in case they cannot agree. In fact, I wish merely to bind them to do that before a war, which nations always do virtually after it. As for the argument that nations will not fulfil their treaties, that would apply to all international engagements. We have many precedents in favour of my plan. One advantage about it is that it could do no harm; for the worst that could happen would be a resort to the means which has hitherto been the only mode of settling national quarrels. Will you think again upon the subject, and tell me whether there is anything impracticable about it?

"I will support the Oath Abolition motion.[4] There ought to be no swearing in courts at all. But instead of oaths, the clerk at the table ought to read to every witness, before he gives his evidence, the clause of the Act of Parliament which imposes a penalty for false testimony."

"*London, June* 19. („)—I am glad you are satisfied with the debate on my arbitration motion.[5] I might have taken higher ground in my argument with more justice

[4] Lord John Russell's resolution, on which a Bill was afterwards founded, for the removal of Jewish disabilities. The Bill passed the Commons, but was rejected by the Lords.

[5] On June 12 Cobden moved an Address to Her Majesty, praying that foreign powers might be invited to concur in treaties, binding the parties to

to the subject, and with more effect upon the minds of my *readers*, but I had to deal with an audience determined to sneer down the motion as Utopian. Ever since the beginning of the session, I had to run the gauntlet of the small wits of the House, who amused themselves at my expense, and tittered at the very word, arbitration. These men would have been as eager as any Quaker to profess a desire for peace, but were prepared to pooh-pooh as utterly visionary any plan for trying to put down the cherished institution of war. It was to meet these people on what they considered their strong ground, that I dwelt upon the practical views of my scheme, and it was some satisfaction to me to see nearly half of my audience leave the House without voting, and to draw from Lord Palmerston a speech full of admissions, which ended by an amendment avowedly framed to escape a direct negation of my motion. The more I have reflected upon the subject, the more I am satisfied that I am right at the right time. Next session I will repeat my proposition, and I will also bring the House to a division upon another and kindred motion, for negotiating with foreign countries, for stopping any further increase of armaments, and, if possible, for agreeing to a gradual disarmament. These motions go naturally together. They are called for by the spirit of the age and the necessities of the finances of all the European states.

"I agree with you in thinking that the French have displayed a want of conscientiousness and an excess of self-esteem in their treatment of the Roman people. I do not remember in all history a more flagitious violation of justice than the French expedition and attack on Rome. The Republic of France within a year of its own existence

refer matters in dispute to Arbitration. Lord Palmerston moved the previous question. There was a rather languid debate, and the previous question was carried by 176 to 79.

1849. ÆT. 45. putting down a Republic in a neighbouring country at the point of the bayonet—a Republic, born of the Parisian barricades, too,—is a monstrous outrage upon decency and common-sense. There is a certain retribution for these sins against the moral laws. They carry in them the seeds of their own punishment. When the French army is in occupation of Rome, then will begin the difficulty of the situation."

When the session was over, Cobden with indefatigable zeal pushed his propagandism in new fields. Though not a member, he accompanied his friends of the Peace Society to the Peace Congress, which was this year held in Paris.

"*Paris, Aug.* 19. (*To Mrs. Cobden.*)—I have had my usual fate in passing the channel. Scarcely were we clear of the harbour at Newhaven, when I was laid on my beam-ends, and for six hours I never moved hand or foot. It was rather cold, and rained a little, so that I was obliged to be covered over with a couple of counterpanes, and there I lay like a mummy till unrolled in the harbour of Dieppe, at about half-past six o'clock. It makes my flesh creep to think of it. I tried to get a bed at the hotel where we stopped, but it was full, and I was therefore obliged to put up with the discomfort and bad odours of a second-rate place. The following morning at half-past eleven I started for Paris by railroad, which goes through Rouen and along the valley of the Seine, and is decidedly the most picturesque scene of all the railroads I have traversed. We reached Paris at half-past four, and I am very comfortably installed at this hotel along with the Peace Committee. There is every prospect of a large attendance at the Congress, but we shall not shine so brightly as I could wish in French names. Our friends had calculated upon the attraction of Lamartine's name, but they are disappointed. From all accounts he appears to be prostrated in mind, body, and estate. We have chosen Victor Hugo for chairman. He stands well socially,

and his name is known, and he is one of the few first-rate men to be had. To my great surprise I find that Horace Say, after signing the circulars inviting the Congress, has gone off to Switzerland with his family. I thought him the most trustworthy man in France. Bastiat is gone to Brussels, but I am assured he will come back to the Congress. The good men who have come here from England to make the arrangements, are sadly put out in their calculations of French support, by having taken too much to heart all the professions, promises, bows, and compliments, which they met with on their first arrival here. They are now taking such demonstrations at their just value. Notwithstanding, however, all drawbacks, the Congress will do much good. We shall pass a resolution condemnatory of war loans, which will serve hereafter as a basis for some demonstrations against the attempt to find money for Russia in the city. I have not yet seen the Hogarths, or anybody I know. Yesterday I spent in looking about Paris. Paris externally looks the same as ever; but I fancy I see a haggard, careworn expression in the people's faces, which bespeaks past suffering and apprehension for the future. This may be imagination, but I think I see a great many sunken eyes and clenched lips amongst all classes. There have been terrible suffering and losses, and nobody has escaped it from the king to the cabman."

"*Paris, Aug.* 25. („)—You will think me negligent, but if you saw how I have been placed here for the last three days you would excuse me. I am at the headquarters of the Committee of Congress, and my bedroom (foolishly enough, on my part) is off the common sitting-room, and morning, noon, and night I have been in the *mêlée.* Besides, the French public persists in regarding me as a very important personage, and I have been more and more beset every day with visitors. But now the sittings of the Con-

1849. Æt. 45. gress are over, and I am able to say that it has proved very successful; each day more and more auditors of a highly-respectable class, and the last day thousands are said to have gone away without being able to enter. Everybody is astonished that upon such a subject, and at this hot season of the year, in Paris, too, a room holding 2000 persons should be crowded for three days running, and upon the same subject. However, so it is. Everything is sure to succeed that has a good principle in it. All our good Quaker friends are in capital spirits. There can be no doubt that our meetings will have done good. Everybody has been talking about them during the week, and the subject of peace has for the first time had its hearing, even in France. My first speech, although there is really little in it, produced a famous effect in the audience and has been almost universally lauded in the papers. It ought to have been well received, for it cost me a good deal of time with the aid of Bastiat to write and prepare to read it. My good friend Bastiat has been two mornings with me in my room, translating and teaching, before eight o'clock. The Government has shown a very friendly disposition towards us. We have had all the public buildings and monuments thrown open to us. On Monday the Versailles water-works and the water-works at St. Cloud are to be set to play for the special gratification of the members of the Congress. These works play but four times a year on Sundays, and the Monday has been chosen on this occasion, in delicate compliment to the religious feeling of the English. To-night we are all invited, men and women, to De Tocqueville's, the French Foreign Minister. On Tuesday the deputation returns, and the members ought to be highly delighted with their visit."

"*Paris, Aug.* 28. („)—After writing to you on Sunday I found that the post did not leave that evening, and

that therefore my letter to you would not probably reach you till Wednesday. On Monday I dined with De Tocqueville with a small party. Yesterday (Monday) we had our excursion to Versailles in a special train at nine o'clock in the morning; about 700 were in the party. We were shown freely over the palace, and then we went to a large hall called the Tennis Court,* in which luncheon was provided. After it was over, I was moved into the chair, and we went through the interesting little ceremony of presenting to each of our American friends a copy of the New Testament in French, as a tribute of our admiration for their zeal in coming so far to attend the Congress. Then we returned to the grounds of the palace, and saw the exhibition of the water-works, which was really a splendid sight. A vast crowd of French people was there, and they were exceedingly good-humoured and polite, but they seemed to be unable to suppress their smiles at the Quakeresses' bonnets. From Versailles the train carried the party to St. Cloud to see the exhibition of the water-works there at night illuminated." 1849. ÆT. 45.

While Cobden was busied in this way, Mr. Bright had gone to study the Irish Question on the spot. He was a month in the country, and was accompanied for part of the time by one of the Commissioners of the Board of Works. His inquiries were extensive and incessant, and what he had said about Irish affairs in some of his speeches secured for him particular attention on every side. Mr. Bright speedily put his finger upon the root of the mischief. What was universally demanded, he said, was security for improvements. Want of this was the cause of perpetual war between landlord and tenant. In order to remove the evil, he agreed

* The famous scene of one of the most memorable incidents of the first stage in the French Revolution. Strange contrast between the mad agitation and furious resolve of the Oath of the Tennis Court, and this pacific presentation of New Testaments to the American Quakers!

1849. with the leading members of the practical party in Ireland,
ÆT. 45. in certain contingencies to introduce a Bill which they were preparing for assuring to the tenant the value of his improvements. This is Cobden's reply:—

"*London, Oct.* 1. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—I was glad to receive your letter, and much interested in the details of your visit to Ireland. Be assured you have done the right thing in going there. It is a duty that ought to be similarly fulfilled by all of us.

"I was staying for a day or two after the receipt of your letter, with a friend in Sussex (Mr. Sharpe), whose son is the nominal proprietor through his mother of the late Sir Wm. Brabazon's estate in Mayo. Both father and son were strong in praise of the Encumbered Estates Act, under which the Brabazon property, hopelessly encumbered and in Chancery, is to be disposed of.

"The father, who is a Sussex proprietor, a liberal man, and a somewhat *enragé* political economist, hopes this Irish measure will be a stepping-stone for setting real estate at greater liberty in England. For myself I can't help thinking that everything has got to be done for Ireland. Hitherto the sole reliance has been on bayonets and *patching*. The feudal system presses upon that country in a way which, as a rule, only foreigners can understand, for we have an ingrained feudal spirit in our English character. I never spoke to a French or Italian economist who did not at once put his finger on the fact, that great masses of landed property were held by the descendants of a conquering race who were living abroad, and thus in a double manner perpetuating the remembrance of conquest and oppression, whilst the natives were at the same time precluded from possessing themselves of landed property and thus becoming interested in the peace of the country. This was always pointed out to me as the prime obstacle to improvement.

How we are to get out of this dilemma with the present House of Commons, and our representative system as it is, is the problem. For we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that our law, or rather custom, of primogeniture, has its roots in the prejudices of the upper portion of the middle class as well as in the privileges of the aristocracy. The snobbishness of the moneyed classes in the great seats of commerce and manufactures is a fearful obstacle to any effectual change of the system.

"It was only at the price of ten millions of money, and hundreds of thousands of famished victims, that we succeeded in passing our Encumbered Estates Bill. Our only consolation is that as we descend in the ranks of the middle class, and approach the more intelligent of the working people, the feudal prejudice diminishes; and this brings us to our only hope for progress, whether in this question or the others on which we feel interested, namely, an increase in the popular element in the House of Commons. I have no fear that we can effect this change gradually, and certainly if we can induce our friends to work with perseverance. I do not object to Walmsley's proceedings—in fact I am grateful to anybody that does anything but stagnate. I subscribed my mite to his association and have cheered him on. He has rendered this good service, at least, that he has brought middle-class people and Chartists together without setting them by the ears, and although he has rather shocked some moderate Liberals by his broad doctrines, he has carried others unconsciously with him. But this good being done, I have not disguised from him that mere public demonstrations without an organized system of working will do nothing towards effecting a change in the representation. That can only be done by local exertions in the registration courts, and above all by the forty shilling votes in the counties.

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"Whilst at Eastbourne we talked this matter over with Fox, who was there, and we agreed that the County qualification movement ought to be encouraged as a means of extending the suffrage, without restricting its object to any particular scheme of organic or practical reforms. *The forty shilling freehold movement ought to be supported solely on the principle of extending the suffrage*—and it is a scheme which involves so many moral and social benefits that it will be, I feel convinced, sustained by a great number of men of moral weight throughout the country who would not work with us for any large scheme of sudden organic change; and these men, once enlisted with us, would go on afterwards for all that we desire.

"I wrote to Taylor asking him some questions: first, whether he thought a delegate meeting of all those already engaged or willing to embark in the forty shilling movement ought to be called. Second, whether he was receiving many letters upon the subject indicating a growing interest in the subject; whether he was invited to go to meetings, and whether he could give me any statistics of the existing number of members, etc. Third, whether he thought a periodical to be called 'The Freeholder,' giving a condensed report of all proceedings and directions about registration, etc., should be published by a Union of the Societies. Here is his answer. Making all deductions for his enthusiasm, it is clear there is life in his movement. If taken up zealously by all of us, I do believe that the present number of electors could be doubled in less than seven years, and, between ourselves, such a constituency would give you at the present moment a more reliable support for thorough practical reforms than universal suffrage. May I predict that if we should succeed to the extent above named, there would not be wanting shrewd members of the Tory aristocracy who would be found advocating universal

suffrage, to take their chance in an appeal to the ignorance and vice of the country against the opinions of the teetotallers, nonconformist and rational Radicals, who would constitute nine-tenths of our phalanx of forty shilling freeholders. I have sent you Taylor's letters. I feel much inclined, indeed I may say I am almost resolved, to go to Birmingham at the end of this month or the beginning of next to a delegate meeting. Tell me what you and Wilson think. Pray show him the letters. When I alluded to a circular to be called 'The Freeholder,' I meant a monthly publication as a beginning, to give information and directions about qualifying, registering, etc., and to record the names and proceedings of all societies. But such a publication might grow into a powerful exponent of the laws of real property, and make people familiar with things which are now Hebrew and Greek to them.

"I have bored you all so much about this forty shilling freehold scheme, that you seem to have fallen naturally into the idea that I cherish it to the exclusion of a broad and specific plan of reform. It is not so. I want it as a means to all that we require, and upon my conscience it is, I believe, the only stepping-stone to any material change. The citadel of privilege in this country is so terribly strong, owing to the concentrated masses of property in the hands of the comparatively few, that we cannot hope to assail it with success unless with the help of the propertied classes in the middle ranks of society, and by raising up a portion of the working-class to become members of a propertied order; and I know no other mode of enlisting such cooperation but that which I have suggested. . . . ."

"*Nov.* 4. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—If you know Mr. Kay's address, don't forget to impress upon him the importance of separating the question of land tenure from that of education in his forthcoming book. Nothing is more

1849. wanted than a good treatise on the former subject. The
ÆT. 45. fate of empires, and the fortunes of their peoples, depend upon the condition of the proprietorship of land to an extent which is not at all understood in this country. We are a servile, aristocracy-loving, lord-ridden people, who regard the land with as much reverence as we still do the peerage and baronetage. Not only have not nineteen-twentieths of us any share in the soil, but we have not presumed to think that we are worthy to possess a few acres of mother earth. The politicians who would propose to break up the estates of this country into smaller properties, will be looked upon as revolutionary democrats aiming at nothing less than the establishment of a Republic upon the ruin of Queen and Lords.

"The only way of approaching this question with advantage at the present moment is through an economical argument. And Mr. Kay may do himself credit by his treatment of the subject, provided he gives us plenty of well-considered facts throwing light upon the comparative condition of the people in countries where land is subdivided, and where it is held in great masses. In my opinion the high moral and social condition of the inhabitants of mountainous countries such as the Swiss, the Biscayans, etc., etc., is to be greatly attributed to the fact that as a rule the land in hilly countries is always more subdivided; in fact, that the face of nature is almost an insuperable bar to the acquisition of large continuous sweeps of landed property.

"P.S.—Don't you think that 'A History of Chartism,' from the framing of the Charter down to the present time, with a temperate but truthful narrative of the doings of the leaders, would be an interesting and useful work? Somerville is the man to do it if he had access to a complete file of the *Northern Star*. The working-class are just now in the mood for reviewing with advantage the bombastic sayings

and abortive doings of Feargus and his lieutenants. The attempted revival of the Chartist agitation under the old leadership makes this an appropriate time for such a retrospect.

"The difficulty with Somerville would be to condense sufficiently his narrative—this would not be easy even with one who had a style less flowing and less imagination than he—for the temptation to quote largely from the speeches and letters of the big Chartist Bobadil would be almost irresistible. Would not such a work be interesting in a series of letters or articles in the *Examiner*, to be afterwards printed in a volume? It would be certain to elicit a howl from the knaves who were subjected to the ordeal of the pillory, and this would be useful in attracting attention to the book."

"*December* 6. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—You must get Captain Mundy's edition of 'Brooke's Diary.' It was published originally by Captain Keppell, and some horrid passages were omitted by the discretion of his friends; but a new edition by Captain Mundy was published while Brooke was afterwards at home, and those parts were restored. See the first vol., p. 311, &c., and p. 325. There are details of bloodshed and executions which, if they had appeared in the first volume, would have checked the sentimental mania which gave Brooke all his powers of evil.

"The above is information which I have from a friend who knows all about the affair from the beginning, and it may be relied on. I have not the book. I fear Gurney will be an obstacle to anything being done. I sometimes doubt whether his obstructiveness at every step does not more than counteract any advantage derived by the Society from the influence of his name. I don't understand men of the world when they tell us we must rely upon the influence of Christian principles, and boggle at every pro-

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posal to enforce them in the current proceedings of governments and societies. If a monk held such language in his cell and invited us to rely upon fasts and flagellations, I could see some consistency in it. But when such sentiments come from a millionaire in Lombard Street, they pass my comprehension. If I wished to do as little as possible, I should wish to be able to convince myself that I was in the path of duty when I folded my arms and exhorted people to pray for the triumph of Christian principles. St. Paul did something more than that, and so did George Fox. See the *Manchester Examiner* of Saturday next, for an article which I have sent upon the Borneo affair. The paper will be forwarded to you. I shall be at Leeds and Sheffield the week after next, and will allude to the subject if I can. It shocks me to think what fiendish atrocities may be committed by English arms without rousing any conscientious resistance at home, provided they be only far enough off, and the victims too feeble to trouble us with their remonstrances or groans. We as a nation have an awful retribution in store for us if Heaven strike a just reckoning, as I believe it does, for wicked deeds even in this world. There must be a public and solemn protest against this wholesale massacre. The Peace Society and the Aborigines Society are shams if such deeds go unrebuked. We cannot go before the world with clean hands on any other question if we are silent spectators of such atrocities."[7]

"*Dec.* 8. („)—You seem to have fallen into the idea that I am looking to the freehold plan as a substitute for a thorough reform. I look to it as a means to do something, and not an end. I wish to abate the power of the aristocracy in their strongholds. Our enemy is as subtle as powerful, and I fear some of us have not duly weighed the difficulties of our

[7] Borneo affairs were not fully discussed in Parliament until 1851, when Cobden supported Hume's motion for inquiry.

task. The aristocracy are afraid of nothing but systematic organization and step-by-step progress. They know that the only advantage we of the stirring class have over them is in habits of persevering labour. They fear nothing but the application of these qualities to the business of political agitation. I prize the privilege of our platforms, and the power of public discussion and denunciation as much as anybody; but public meetings for Parliamentary Reform which do not tend to systematic work (as was not the case in the League), will be viewed by the aristocracy with complacency as the harmless blowing off of the steam.

"With this impression, I have urged upon Walmsley an organization for bringing the registers of the Boroughs under the control of men of his way of thinking, men favourable to the four points. This, coupled with the County qualification movement, which is urged on by men of the same party, would in two or three years if resolutely worked place us in a respectable position in the House.

"You seem to speak as if I were the obstacle to the movement being carried out in Manchester last year. My own fear was lest the public elsewhere should be deceived as to what we should do for them in Manchester, for I felt that we had not the materials there to renew such an agitation as was proposed. It is not in human nature that, after the exhaustion of one great effort, the same men should begin another of an equally arduous character. I am also of opinion that we have not the same elements in Lancashire for a Democratic Reform movement, as we had for Free Trade. To me the most discouraging fact in our political state is the condition of the Lancashire Boroughs, where, with the exception of Manchester, nearly all the municipalities are in the hands of the stupidest Tories in England; and where we can hardly see our way for an equal half-share of Liberal representation in Parliament. We have the labour

1849. ÆT. 45. of Hercules in hand to abate the power of the aristocracy and their allies, the snobs of the towns. I have faith in nothing but slow and heavy toil, and I shall lose all hope if we cannot see with toleration, and a desire to encourage, every effort that aims at curtailing the power and privileges of the common enemy."

Cobden was never so immersed in political projects as to forget how much of the vital work of social improvement lies entirely away from the field of politics. While he was corresponding with Mr. Bright about economic and parliamentary reform, and with George Combe about education, he did not lose sight of a third cause which seemed to him, as it has always done to Mr. Bright also, not any less important to the national welfare than either of the other two. The letter which follows was written to Mr. Livesey, a zealous advocate for the promotion of Temperance:—

"*London, Oct.* 10.—Your letter has given me very great pleasure. It has often been a matter of sincere regret to me that I have not had the pleasure since my return to England of shaking hands with you. I have taken up my abode permanently here, for being obliged to be six months in London, and finding it intolerable to be so long separated from my family, I had no alternative but to make choice of one abode, or to have two removals of my household every year, which is both unpleasant and expensive. As I had no business ties in Manchester, I was tempted by the climate to leave my esteemed friends and neighbours to settle here, where I shall never form the sterling friendships that I possessed in Lancashire. The damp and rigorous climate of South Lancashire with its clay soil, never agreed with my constitution, which requires a more genial temperature and a sandy dry soil, such as I was used to in my early days in Sussex. My abode is near the Great Western Station, Paddington, the highest part, as well as the driest, of the metropolis.

"You are right in the path of usefulness you have chalked out for yourself; the temperance cause really lies at the root of all social and political progression in this country. The English people are, in many respects, the most reliable of all earthly beings. I am not one who likes to laud the Anglo-Saxon race as being superior to all others in every quality; for when we remember that we owe our religion to Asiatics, our literature, architecture, and fine arts greatly to the Greeks, our numeral signs to the Arabs, our civilization to the inhabitants of Italy, and much of our physical science and mechanical inventions to the Germans; when we recollect these things it ought to make us moderate in our exclusive pretensions. But give me a sober Englishman, possessing the truthfulness common to his country, and the energy so peculiarly his own, and I will match him for being capable of equalling any other man in the every-day struggles of life. He has a self-depending and self-governing instinct which carries him triumphantly through all difficulties and dangers. But in travelling through all civilized countries, I have often been struck with the superiority that foreigners enjoy over us from their greater sobriety, which imparts to them higher advantages of civilization, even when they are really far behind us in the average of education and in political institutions. The energy natural to the English race degenerates to savage brutality under the influence of habitual drunkenness; and one of the worst effects of intemperate habits is to destroy that self-respect which lies at the bottom of all virtuous ambition. It is here that I have often been struck with the inferiority of our working people, at least that portion of them which habitually indulges in drunkenness, happily every year diminishing in number. They want the decent self-possession and courteous manners which you find among more sober nations. If you could convert us

1849. ÆT. 45. into a nation of water-drinkers, I see no reason why, in addition to our being the most energetic, we should not be the most polished people, for we are inferior to none in the inherent qualities of the gentleman, truthfulness and benevolence. With these sentiments, I need not say how much I reverence your efforts in the cause of teetotalism, and how gratified I was to find that my note (written privately, by the way, to Mr. Cassell) should have afforded you any satisfaction. I am a living tribute to the soundness of your principles. With a delicate frame and nervous temperament, I have been enabled, by temperance, to do the work of a strong man. But it has only been by more and more temperance. In my early days I used sometimes to join with others in a glass of spirit and water, and beer was my every-day drink. I soon found that spirits would not do, and for twenty years I have not taken a glass unless as a medicine. Then port and sherry became almost as incompatible with my mental exertions, and for many years I have not touched those wines excepting for form's sake in after-dinner society. Latterly, when dining out, I find it necessary to mix water even with champagne. At my own table I never have anything but water when dining with my family, and we have not a beer-barrel in the house. For some years we have stipulated with all our servants to drink water, and we allow them extra wages to show that we do not wish to treat them worse than our neighbours. All my children will, I hope, be teetotallers. So you see that without beginning upon principle, I have been brought to your beverage solely by a nice observance of what is necessary to enable me to surmount an average mental labour of at least twelve hours a day. I need not add that it would be no sacrifice to me to join your ranks by taking the pledge. On the contrary, it would be a satisfaction to me to know that from this moment I should never taste

fermented drink again. Shall I confess it? My only restraining feeling would be that it would compel a singularity of habits in social life. Not that this would, I trust, be an insurmountable obstacle, if paramount motives of usefulness urged me to the step."

In connexion with the same subject, he wrote to Mr. Ashworth, mildly protesting against a political banquet, and pointing out the superior courage of the Americans in their way of making war on this particular temptation to excessive self-indulgence:—

"*Dec.* 13.—I am not quite sure that dinner-parties are the best tactics for our party to fall into in Manchester. Our strength lies with the shopocracy, and I think the members for Manchester are turning their backs upon the main army of reformers when they leave the Free Trade Hall for a meeting of any kind in a smaller room. Public dinners are good for our opponents, but I have more faith in teetotalism than bumper glasses, so far as the interests of the democracy are concerned. The moral force of the masses lies in the temperance movement, and I confess I have no faith in anything apart from that movement for the elevation of the working class. We do not sufficiently estimate the amount of crime, vice, poverty, ignorance, and destitution, which springs from the drinking habits of the people. The Americans have a clearer perception of the evils of drunkenness upon the political and material prospects of the people, and their leading men set an example of temperance on all public occasions. I lately read an account of a great political meeting in New Hampshire, at which Daniel Webster presided, when fifteen hundred persons sat down to dinner, at which not a drop of wine, spirits, or beer was drunk. Depend on it, they were more than a match for four times their number of wine-bibbers. You will wonder why I preach this homily to *you*. But it is apropos of the

1849. ÆT. 45.

Corn Exchange dinner. . . . Sure am I that when the election day comes, the teetotallers will be found the best workers in the ranks of the Liberals, whilst the drinkers will be the only hope of the Tories."

"I remember that one year (1843)," Cobden once wrote to Combe, by way of illustrating this matter, "Bright, Colonel Thompson, and I, invaded Scotland and made a tour of the kingdom, separating as we entered and reuniting at Stirling on the completion of our work. There, after a large public meeting, we adjourned to our hotel, where we were joined by a number of baillies and other leading men, who sat with us, to our great discomfort (for we needed our beds), till one o'clock in the morning, drinking whisky-toddy out of glasses which they filled from tumblers with little ladles, and I remember that a certain sleight of hand in this operation, acquired, I suppose, by long practice, amused us Southrons a good deal. As we three Englishmen took nothing but tea, it drew attention to our total abstinence principles, which were then more rare than at present. We compared notes with one another in the hearing of the baillies, and found that in our tour in Scotland not a shilling had been paid by us for spirits, beer, or wine." Their companions were at first disposed to eye them rather contemptuously, but after hearing them recount the work they had gone through, the number of meetings they had attended, very often two in one day, the baillies were constrained to admit, as they placed their ladles finally in the emptied tumblers, that water-drinking was not incompatible with indomitable energy and long perseverance in exhausting labour.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DON PACIFICO DEBATE—THE PAPAL AGGRESSION—CORRESPONDENCE WITH MR. BRIGHT ON REFORM—KOSSUTH.

The year 1850 has an important place in the history of Cobden's principles, because it is the date of a certain discussion in Parliament which marked the triumph for the rest of his life, though for no longer, of the school which was inveterately antagonistic to his whole scheme of national policy. The famous Don Pacifico debate was the turning-point in the career of Lord Palmerston, and it was the first clear signal of the repulse of Cobden's cherished doctrine for twenty years to come. 1850. ÆT. 46.

Lord Palmerston had been at the Foreign Office for four years. During that time he had been incessantly active in the affairs of half the countries of Europe. That *taquinerie* of which Bastiat complained so bitterly to Cobden, was at its height. Nothing like it was ever seen in our politics before or since. He had brought England to the brink of war with France in connexion with the Spanish Marriages. He had sent the fleet to the Tagus to prevent the people of Portugal from settling their internal affairs in their own way. He had plunged into the thick of the dangerous European complications connected with the civil war among the Swiss Cantons. An English agent had been despatched on a roving commission to the states south of the Alps, to teach politics, as Mr. Disraeli said, to the country where Machiavelli was born.

1850. ÆT. 46. When war broke out between the King of Naples and his subjects in Sicily, Lord Palmerston's emissary rode the whirlwind and tried to guide the storm. The bustling delirium came to a climax when the Foreign Secretary told his ambassador at Madrid to give a severe lecture to the Spanish Government for failing to respect the opinions and sentiments of their country. With a laudable sense of their own dignity, the Spanish Government sent Lord Palmerston's despatch back, and ordered the British Minister to leave the country in eight and forty hours. Lord Palmerston sincerely believed that he was carrying out those vague and much disputed objects, which go by the name of the Principles of Mr. Canning. Nor has any one ever denied that in all this untiring restlessness he was moved by an honest interest in good government, or by a vigorous resolution that his country should play a prominent and worthy part in settling the difficulties of Europe. The conception had about it a generous and taking air. It was magnificent, but unluckily there was no sense in it. For the unreflecting portion of mankind the spectacle of energy on a large scale has always irresistible attractions; vigour becomes an end in itself and an object of admiration for its own sake. Now that the contemporary mists have cleared away, everybody can see that Lord Palmerston's vigour at this epoch was futile in its ultimate results to others, and in its immediate circumstances full of the gravest danger to ourselves. It kept us constantly on the edge of war, it involved waste of our resources, and it diverted attention from the long list of improvements that were so sorely needed within our own gates.

With what feeling Cobden watched these doings, we may imagine. They roused him to renewed assaults upon the public opinion which tolerated or abetted them. Throughout the autumn of 1849 he and his friends pursued their operations with all their usual zeal and confidence. He made

speeches at Leeds, Bradford, Manchester, and others of the northern towns, saying over again with new illustrations what he had been saying during the previous session about retrenchment, readjusted taxation, the necessity of lessened armaments, the impolicy of our colonial relations. People listened, were keenly interested, and in the course of years the seed which Cobden was sowing germinated and bore good fruit. But there were for the moment certain transactions in Eastern Europe which stirred popular passion in England to the depths, and prepared the way for those unfortunate events which five years later seemed to dash the whole fabric of Cobden's hopes down to the ground. 1850. ÆT. 46.

The Hungarian War of Independence was one of the most remarkable incidents in the revolutionary outburst of 1848, as its suppression was one of the most important episodes in the absolutist reaction which so speedily followed. The Czar of Russia came to the aid of the Emperor of Austria; after a brave resistance the Hungarian forces were forced to surrender to the Russian general; while Kossuth and others of the patriotic leaders crossed the frontier into the Turkish provinces, and placed themselves under the protection of the Ottoman Porte. The two northern powers demanded that the refugees should be handed over by the Turkish government, and for some time Europe looked with intense excitement upon the diplomatic struggle. Cobden shared to the full the vehement indignation with which his countrymen had watched these evil transactions. At the same time he did not fail to see the danger of this just sympathy with a good cause turning into an irresistible cry for armed intervention on behalf of Hungarian Independence and its champions. It must be owned that Cobden's position was a very delicate one. It seems to the present writer to be impossible to state the principle of non-intervention in rational and statesmanlike terms, if it is under all circum-

1850. stances, and without any qualification or limit, to preclude
ÆT. 46. an armed protest against intervention by other foreign powers. There may happen to be good reasons why we should on a given occasion passively watch a foreign Government interfering by violence in the affairs of another country. Our own Government may have its hands full; or it may have no military means of intervening to good purpose; or its intervention might in the long-run do more harm than good to the objects of its solicitude. But there can be no general prohibitory rule. Where, as here, a military despot interfered to crush the men of another country while struggling for their national rights, no principle can make it wrong for a free nation to interfere by force against him. It can only be a question of expediency and prudence.

Of course so obvious a distinction was not unperceived by Cobden, and he had a sufficiently strong case without straining the general principle further than it can legitimately be made to go. At a meeting which was held at the London Tavern to protest against the Russian invasion of Hungary, he set forth in definite language his view of the nature and the duty of a right intervention. By a singular chance, Lord Palmerston forgot to meddle, even by a lecture, in the one case at this date where he might possibly have meddled to good effect. Russia, said Cobden, was allowed to march her armies across the territory of Turkey, through Wallachia and Moldavia, to strike a death-blow at the heart of Hungary, and yet no protest was recorded by our Government against that act. It was his deliberate conviction, as it was that of the most illustrious men who were engaged in the Hungarian struggle, that if Lord Palmerston had made a simple verbal protest in energetic terms, Russia would never have invaded Hungary. "It is well known," he said, "that the Ministers of the Czar almost went down on their knees to beg and entreat him not to embark in a struggle between

Austria and Hungary. Our protest would immediately have been backed by the Ministry of the Czar if it had been made; and I believe it would have prevented that most atrocious outrage upon the rights and liberties of a constitutional country." This protest he would have made, but he would have resisted any attempt to fight the battle of Hungary on the banks of the Danube or the Theiss.

In other words he would have relied upon opinion. He was too practical to dream that regard for purely moral opinion could be trusted to check the overbearing impulse of powerful selfish interests. Wars, however, constantly arise not from the irreconcilable clashing of great interests of this kind, but from mismanaged trifles. This was what he had maintained in his argument for arbitration. The grave and unavoidable occasions for war, he said, are few. In the ordinary dealings of nations with one another, where a difference arises, it is about something where external opinion might easily be made to carry decisive weight. In the undecided state of the Czar's mind as to the invasion of Hungary, a vigorous expression of English opinion, might and probably would have made all the difference. However that might be, it is the duty of the more highly civilized powers to lose no opportunity of shaping and strengthening the common opinion of Europe against both intervention of nations in one another's affairs, and against war for the first resort instead of the very last, as the means of settling international differences.

At this time Cobden warmly took up what seemed a most effective way of checking war and the preparations for war on the part of the two powers whose tyrannical action had inflamed the resentment of his countrymen. With singular fire he entered on a crusade against the practice of lending, first to Austria and then to Russia, the great sums of money which were under various disguises and pretexts

1850. ÆT. 46. in effect borrowed to repay the cost of the late oppressive war. In October he delivered a powerful speech against the Austrian loan of seven millions. In the following January he convened a meeting at which he denounced with still more unsparing invective the loan of five and a half millions which was asked for by Russia. He insisted that the investment was unsound; that the funding system is injurious to mankind and unjust in principle; that the exportation of capital to be destroyed and lost in the bottomless abyss of foreign wars, is contrary to the principles of political economy. What paradox could be more flagrant, he asked, than for a citizen to lend money to be the means of military preparations on the part of a foreign Power, when he knew, or ought to have known, that these very preparations for which he was providing would in their turn impose upon himself and the other taxpayers of his own country the burden of counter-preparations to meet them? What man with the most rudimentary sense of public duty could pretend that it was no affair of his to what use his money was put, so long as his interest was high and his security adequate? What was this money wanted for? Austria, with her barbarous consort, had been engaged in a cruel and remorseless war, and now she came, stretching forth her bloodstained hand to honest Dutchmen and Englishmen, and asking them to furnish the force of this hateful devastation. Not only was such a system a waste of national wealth, an anticipation of income, a destruction of capital, the imposition of a heavy and profitless burden on future generations: besides all this, it was a direct connivance at acts and a policy which the very men who were thus asked to lend their money to support it, professed to dislike and condemn, and had good reason for disliking and condemning. This system of foreign loans for warlike purposes, Cobden argued, by which England,

Holland, Germany, and France are invited to pay for the arms, clothing, and food of the belligerents, is a system calculated to perpetuate the horrors of war. Those, moreover, who lend money for such purposes, are destitute of any of those excuses by which men justify resort to the sword. They cannot plead patriotism, self-defence, or even anger, or the lust of military glory. They sit down coolly to calculate the chances to themselves of profit or loss in a game in which the lives of human beings are at stake. They have not even the savage and brutal gratification which the old pagans had, after they had paid for a seat in the amphitheatre, of witnessing the bloody combats of gladiators in the circus.[1]

It is impossible not to admire the courage, the sound sense, and the elevation, with which Cobden thus strove to diffuse the notion of moral responsibility in connexion with the use of capital. Such a doctrine was a novelty even in the pulpit, and much more of a novelty on the platform. The press, which never goes before public opinion in such things and usually lags a little way behind, attacked him with its rudest weapons. The City resented the intrusion of the irrelevancies of right and wrong into the region of scrip, premium, and speculative percentage. Even some of his own friends asked him why, on their common principles of Free Trade, he could not let them lend their money in the dearest market and borrow in the cheapest; why there was not to be Free Trade in money as in everything else.[2]

[1] *Speeches*, ii. 189.

[2] "I was told that a man had a right to lend his money without inquiring what it was wanted for. But if he knew it was wanted for a vile purpose had he a right of so lending it? I put this question to a City man:—'Somebody asks you to lend money to build houses with, and you know it is wanted for the purpose of building infamous houses: would you be justified in lending the money?' He replied, 'I would.' I rejoined, 'Then I am not going to argue with you—you are a man for the police magistrate to look after; for if you would lend money to build infamous houses, you

1850. Æt. 46. Few reformers find the path easy, but for none is it so hard as for him who introduces a new morality. Cobden could not flinch, because he was far-sighted enough to perceive that the destination of capital becomes more vitally important in proportion as society becomes more democratic. Germany is an instance before our eyes at this moment how, with modern populations, the destruction of capital in military enterprises breeds Socialism. As population increases, so does the necessity increase of wisely husbanding the resources on which it depends for subsistence. As political power now finds its way from the few to the masses, so much the more urgent is it that they should be taught to see how detrimental war is to them, not merely because it destroys human life, which after all is cheap, but because it plays havoc with the material instruments which raise or maintain that no less momentous object, the habit and standard of living.

Cobden's urgent feeling about war was not in any degree sentimental; it arose from a truly philosophic view of the peculiar requirements which the changing forces and condition of modern society had brought with them. He opposed war, because war and the preparation for it consumed the resources which were required for the improvement of the temporal condition of the population. Sir Robert Peel had anticipated him in pressing upon Parliament the danger to European order arising from military expenditure. Heavy military expenditure, he said, meant heavy taxation, and heavy taxation meant discontent and revolution. That wise statesman had courageously repudiated the old maxim, *Bellum para si pacem velis*. A maxim that admits of more contradiction, he said, or one that should be received with greater reserve, never fell from

would very likely keep one yourself, if you could get ten per cent. by it.'" —*Speeches*, ii. 418.

the lips of man. What is always still more important, Peel was not afraid to say that it is impossible to secure a country against all conceivable risks. If in time of peace you insist on having all the colonial garrisons up to the standard of complete efficiency, and if every fortification is to be kept in a state of perfect repair, then no amount of annual expenditure can ever be sufficient. If you accept the opinions of military men, who tell a Minister that they would throw upon him the whole responsibility in the event of a war breaking out, and predict the loss of this or the other valuable possession, then the country must be overwhelmed by taxation. It is inevitable that risks should be run. Peel's declaration was, and must at all times remain, the language of common sense, and it furnishes the key to Cobden's characteristic attitude towards a whole class of political questions where his counsels have been most persistently disregarded.[1]

It was thus from the political, and not from the religious or humanitarian side, that Cobden sought to arouse men to the criminality of war. If an unnecessary war is a crime, then to supply the funds for it, even for the sake of an extra fraction per cent., is to be an accessory before or after the fact in that crime. And that is the wise and timely sermon for which Cobden took the events of those days for a text. In the case of land, the world was quite ready to recognize the truth, that property has its duties as well as its rights. Cobden's views on the morality of war loans extends the same principle to the whole administration of property of every kind.

Speculative forecasts of this sort were uncongenial enough to the veteran practitioner at the Foreign Office, who manipulated events on other principles. Things were now moving strangely counter to Cobden's hopes. When Russia and Austria pressed for the surrender of the Hun-

[1] The passage from Peel was quoted by Cobden, *Speeches*, ii. 414.

1850. Æt. 46. garian refugees, Lord Palmerston despatched the fleet to the Dardanelles by way of encouragement to the Porte to hold firm. According to Cobden, this was a superfluous display of force. As he contended, the demands of Russia and Austria had been already withdrawn in face of a vigorous display of the public opinion of western Europe. What is certain is that Lord Palmerston's action at this time laid the train which not long afterwards exploded in the Crimean War. His next step was exactly calculated to embitter the chronic struggle between England, France, and Russia in the East, and by its peculiar lawlessness to set an example which was sure to be followed, of the worst possible way of settling international difficulties. There happened to be certain claims which the British Government had for a long time been pressing against the kingdom of Greece. A portion of these claims were made on behalf of a Portuguese Jew from Gibraltar, whom accident of domicile made a British subject, and after him the whole episode has been known as the affair of Don Pacifico. What Lord Palmerston did was to despatch the fleet on its way back from the Dardanelles to the Piræus. There it detained not only a man-of-war belonging to the Greek Government, but a number of merchant vessels owned by private individuals. They were detained as material guarantees. There has been very little difference of opinion since, that this was an intolerably high-handed proceeding. As is observed by Finlay, the sagacious historian of Greece, who chanced to be a claimant, though of a more reputable sort than Don Pacifico, no Government in a civilized state of society can be allowed to have a right to seize private property belonging to the subjects of another State, or to blockade the port of another State, without taking upon itself the responsibility of declaring war.[4] Apart from this, it was a direct and

[4] See Mr. Finlay's story of the whole transaction in his most valuable

certain provocation to two Powers, whom it was especially our interest at this time to soothe and conciliate.[5] 1850. Ær. 46.

France interposed with the proffer of good offices, and they were accepted. But Lord Palmerston so blundered and mismanaged the subsequent negotiations, that at one moment we were brought unpleasantly near to a rupture with the French Government, while we were at the same time exposed to remonstrances from Russia, of which the most mortifying feature was that they were absolutely and unanswerably well-founded both in policy and international morality. From beginning to end, alike in its inception and in every detail of it, equally in its purpose and its results, it was probably the most inept, futile, wrong-headed, and gravely mischievous transaction in which Lord Palmerston's recklessness ever engaged him.

The discussion which took place upon these doings in the House of Commons really covered the whole of Lord Palmerston's policy, and the spirit and the principles of it. Not Sir Robert Peel alone, but Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Disraeli, Sir James Graham, and Cobden, all bore with overpowering weight against the Minister, not only for his impolitic act in regard to Greece, but for his intervention in Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, and everywhere else. Lord Palmer-

Hist. of Greece, vii. 211, &c. Mr. Finlay's verdict is that "the whole affair reflects very little credit on any of the Governments that took part in it."

[5] "I conceive," said Sir Robert Peel, "that there was an obvious mode of settling the claims without offending France, and without provoking a rebuke from Russia. My belief is that without any compromise of your own dignity, you might have got the whole money you demanded, and avoided the difficulties in which you have involved yourselves with these Powers. With regard to Russia, you had just asserted the authority of England by remonstrating with her for attempting to expel ten refugees from Turkey. She acquiesced in your demands; and with regard to France you had all but the certainty of obtaining her cordial sympathy and good feeling. There never was a period in which it was more the interest of this country to conciliate the good feeling of Russia and France."—Speech in the Don Pacifico Debate, June 28. *Hansard*, cxii. 683.

1850. Ær. 46. ston defended himself from the dusk of one day until the dawn of another with an energy and skill which commanded the admiration even of those who thought worst of his case. He was supported by Mr. Cockburn, afterwards the brilliant Chief Justice of our time, in a speech which is undeniably one of the most glittering and successful pieces of advocacy ever heard either in forum or senate. It is only when we turn to the real facts and the sober reason of the case, that we perceive that the fine things and impassioned turns of this striking performance were in truth no better than heroics for the jury and superb claptrap.[6] Half-a-dozen of Sir Robert Peel's sober sentences in his reply—the last speech that he ever made—were enough to overthrow the whole gorgeous fabric.

The issues were broadly and unmistakably placed. Whether in defending the rights of British subjects abroad or in other dealings with foreign nations, the Minister of this country ought to seek his end by politic and conciliatory means, or go rudely to it by violence and armed force? Whether it is his business to interfere with lectures or with ships in the domestic affairs of other countries, even on the side of self-government? Whether he should seek and manufacture occasions for intervention, or should on the contrary be

[6] As Cobden left the House after Mr. Cockburn's speech, he was joined by Mr. Disraeli. "I call yours," he said to Cobden, "the Manchester School of Oratory; and I call his the Crown and Anchor School." * Cobden was never a great admirer of the eloquent lawyer. The first occasion on which they met was at a dinner-party during the height of the League agitation. "He took the Protectionists' side," said Cobden, "and we had a long wrangle before the whole company. As I was top-sawyer on that plank, I had no difficulty in flinging him pretty often." They met again at dinner the very day after the Pacifico division. Sir Alexander Cockburn permitted himself to use some of those asperities—Cobden called them by a more stinging name—which the sworn party-man is apt to use against a conscientious dissident. He told Cobden that he ought to be turned out of the Reform Club. But Cobden was always able to hold his own against impertinence, and the advocate took little by his motion.

* *Cobden to J. Parkes*, Nov. 23, 1856.

too slow rather than too quick in recognizing even such occasions as arise of themselves?[6] Whether interference should be frequent, peremptory, and at any cost, or should on the contrary be "rare, deliberate, decisive in character, and effectual for its end"?[7] Whether England should make light of the restraints of the law of nations, pushing the claim of the *Civis Romanus* with a high and unflinching hand, or should on the contrary by her strictness of care and scruple fortify and enlarge that domain which justice and peace have already acquired for themselves among the brotherhoood of nations? Such were the topics and the issues of the controversy. The victory was to the old idols of the tribe and the market-place. The foreign policy of Lord Palmerston was approved, and its author encouraged, by a majority of six and forty.

The effect of this remarkable debate was very great. It is true that it was not wholly a debate on the merits. Under government by parties, a debate wholly on the merits is very uncommon. The question nominally at issue was mixed up with suspicion of a French diplomatic conspiracy, and belief in a Protectionist intrigue. The public was indignant that a domestic faction should lend itself for purposes of its own to a cabal of foreigners against a Minister who had been too clever for them. It is true, also, that when we talk of the public during these years, the phrase does not designate the nation at large, even in the limited sense in which it does this now. In every epoch the political public really means the people who have votes, and at that time the people who had votes were an extremely small fraction of the nation at large. When that is said, however, there is very little doubt that the language which Lord Palmerston used on this occasion was the language which the majority of Englishmen were not sorry to hear, and would not be likely to repudiate when

[7] Mr. Gladstone's description.

1850. it had been boldly spoken. The day after the Don Pacifico
ÆT. 46. debate, Lord Palmerston was justified in speaking of himself as having been rendered by it the most popular Minister that for a very long time had held his office.[3]

The confusion of parties made this sudden exaltation of Lord Palmerston a very important event, and we may believe that he was quite alive to the possibilities which it opened to his ambition. Public life, as was said, was divided at that particular moment between statesmen without a party and a party without statesmen. Lord Derby and Mr. Disraeli had made a bold bid for power, but Lord Palmerston foresaw that they could not keep it if they got it. The reforming Whigs of the type of Lord John Russell had been steadily losing ground ever since their brilliant triumph twenty years before, and they were now lower in popular influence than they had ever been. The Manchester school were out of the question. There was one statesman only whose authority, and the clearness of whose convictions, might have baulked Lord Palmerston's rise, and have saved the country from the demoralization of the Palmerstonian reign. This statesman, by a most disastrous destiny, met his death the very day after he had protested with all the cogent sagacity of his ripened experience against Lord Palmerston's unsafe policy, and his mistaken impressions of the honour and dignity of the country.

The death of Sir Robert Peel may without exaggeration be described as one of the most untoward incidents in Cobden's public life, as it was a dire and irreparable loss to the country. Cobden was instantly alive to the calamity. "Poor Peel," he wrote three days after the event, "I have scarcely yet realized to my mind the conviction that he will never again occupy his accustomed seat opposite to my place in the House. I sat with him on Saturday till two

[3] Mr. Ashley's *Life*, ii. 161.

o'clock in the Royal Commission*—the last public business in which he was engaged—and in four hours afterwards he received his mortal stroke. We do not yet know the full extent of our loss. It will be felt in the state of parties and in the progress of public business to its full extent hereafter. I had observed his tendencies most attentively during the last few years, and had felt convinced that on questions in which I take a great interest, such as the reduction of armaments, retrenchment of expenditure, the diffusion of peace principles, etc., he had strong sympathies—stronger than he had yet expressed—in favour of my views. Read his last speech again, and observe what he says about diplomacy, and in favour of settling international disputes by reference to mediation instead of by ships of war."[1]

If the Don Pacifico debate in Parliament gave a check to the confidence of Cobden's aspirations, a storm which burst out over the length and breadth of the land a few months later, still more effectually chilled his faith in the hold of good sense and the spirit of tolerance upon the minds of his countrymen. In the autumn of 1850, Great Britain was convulsed by the tempest of the Papal Aggression, which now looks none the less repulsive because we can see to what a degree it was ludicrous. Unfortunately Lord John Russell lent himself to the prejudices and alarms which are so instantly roused in the minds of Englishmen and Scotchmen by anything that reminds them of the existence of the Roman Catholic Church. He fanned the flame by a letter to the Bishop of Durham, which has as conspicuous a place among his acts and monuments as the letter from Edinburgh in 1845. In a damaging moment for his position at this time, as well as for his future political reputation, he

* The Commission for the Great Exhibition of 1851.

[1] *To G. Hadfield*, July 5, 1850.

1849. brought in and passed a measure, as much to be blamed
ÆT. 45. for the bigotry which inspired it, as for the futility of its provisions. The effect in the balanced state of parties was to give an irretrievable shake to his Administration, for his willing concessions to the bigotry of England and Scotland kindled the just resentment of Ireland. The Irish vote was indispensable to every Whig Ministry since the Reform Bill, and this was now alienated from the Government of Lord John Russell. Its fall could only be a matter of a few months, and was only delayed even for that short time by the difficulty of finding or devising a political combination that should take its place.

The following extracts from his correspondence will show what Cobden was doing and thinking about between the winter of 1849 and the winter of 1851 :—

"*Leeds, Dec.* 18, 1849. (*To Mrs. Cobden.*)—I have received your despatches; don't trouble yourself to send the proofs of the speeches. I am staying with Mrs. Carbutt, who has taken me from Mr. Schofield and Mr. Marshall. In fact, judging by the competition that there was for me, I am rather at a premium. The meeting this evening promises to be a very full and influential one. I wish it was over, for I am sorely perplexed at these demonstrations, for want of something fresh to say."

"*Leeds, Dec.* 19. („)—We had a most thoroughly successful meeting last evening, and I spoke with tolerably good effect, but I am not sure that I shall not appear in the reports to have been rather rough with the landlords. At all events, I expect the Protectionists will raise a fierce howl at me."

"*Bradford, Dec.* 21.—We had a very successful meeting here last evening, and I made a speech upon the Colonies, which I hope will be freely reported, for it is my opinion that it went pretty fully into the arguments, and is calcu-

lated to diffuse sound information upon the subject. The people here have resolved to republish it for cheap distribution."

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"*April* 18. (*To James Mellor.*)—I observed in a paper the other day an account of the interference of our Admiral on the South American station for the purpose of demanding the settlement of certain claims made by creditors upon the Government of Venezuela. The account stated that the demand included the payment of money due for Loans. My object in writing is to ask whether you can ascertain for me through any house having relations there, whether the claim of the Stock Exchange creditors was included. I consider these debts to be totally different from those due to merchants for property in the form of merchandise *sold* to foreign states, or for goods seized unjustly in time of hostilities. Money *lent* through the Stock Exchange is generally advanced on such terms as to cover known risks of repudiation, &c. Besides the money is advanced by foreigners even when the loan is nominally contracted in England, and the result of our Government becoming the collectors of such debts would be that we should be made the bumbailiffs of half a dozen nations besides our own. I am watching very jealously any step of the kind, because if the principle be once adopted, it is not easy to see where we can stop. If we are to blockade the coast of a South American State, how can we refuse the creditors of the repudiating State of Mississippi to blockade the port of New Orleans? There will be obvious disgrace as well as injustice in dealing differently with weak and with powerful States."

"*April* 18. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—Look in the money article of the *Times* to-day. The creditors of the Spanish Government are talking of petitioning Parliament to collect their debts. We must watch with jealousy the first attempt of

1850. Ær. 46. this kind, and be prepared to agitate against it. Did you see the report in the papers that the Admiral on the South American station had demanded the debts due to English Creditors of the Government of Venezuela? I am anxious to know whether the Stock Exchange loans are included in the claims. Do you know anybody in the City who would inform us?"

"*April* 23. („)—It seems that there is—if we may judge of the article in to-day's *Times*—a prospect of still further delay about the Greek affair. Would it not be well to draw up a memorial to the Prime Minister, or else a petition to Parliament upon the subject? The object, of course, should be to show the propriety of submitting the whole affair to the arbitration of disinterested parties. It is just the case for arbitration. And the memorial should speak in terms of strong condemnation of a system of International Policy, which leaves the possibility of two nations being brought to such a state of hostility upon questions of such insignificant importance. Here is a dispute about a few thousand pounds or of personal insult, matters which might be equitably adjusted by two or three impartial individuals of average intelligence and character, for the settlement of which a fleet of line-of-battle ships has been put in requisition, and the entire commerce of a friendly nation largely engaged in trade with our own people has been for months subjected to interruption. It should be stated that apart from the outrage which such proceedings are calculated to inflict upon the feelings of humanity and justice, they must tend to bring diplomacy into disrepute. Without offering any opinion on the merits of the question, you should pray that our Government should agree at once to submit the whole matter to the absolute decision of arbitrators mutually appointed, and it might be added that this case affords a strong argument for

entering upon a general system of arbitration treaties, by which such great inconveniences and dangers springing from such trivial causes may be averted for the future. It seems to me that this is an occasion on which you might frame a very practical memorial, and thus put the present system in the wrong in the eyes of even those men of business and politicians who do not go with you on principle."

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"*July* 2. (*To Mrs. Cobden.*)—I am getting famously abused for my vote on Roebuck's Motion, but I never felt more satisfied than I do on the course I took. The accounts of poor Peel's health are very unsatisfactory. I fear very much the worst. It would be a great national calamity to lose him, and with him we should lose the best safeguard, if not the only one amongst statesmen against a reaction at headquarters from Free-trade to Protection."

"*July* 4. („)—You will have seen the sad news of Sir R. Peel's death. I have not been able to think of anything since. Poor soul, his health had been sacrificed by his sufferings in the cause of Free Trade, and he may be said to have died a victim to the best act of his political life. I should not like to be in the position of those who by their unsparing hostility inflicted martyrdom upon him."

At the close of the Session, Cobden proceeded to the Peace Congress, which this year was held at Frankfort.

"*Cologne, Aug.* 17. (*To Mrs. Cobden.*)—My companions and I reached the station just in time to catch the train, and we reached Dover without further adventure. There we found that the wind had been blowing hard for a couple of days, so much so that the mail of the previous night from Calais was several hours behind its time. This was not a very agreeable prospect. Our boat was fixed to start for Ostend at eleven at night, and so, after taking some long walks about the town and neighbourhood, we took a com-

1850. fortable dinner at six. At nine o'clock the boat was obliged
ÆT. 46. to leave the harbour, and cast anchor outside to save the tide. We went aboard with our luggage, and for upwards of two hours we were rocking at anchor in a heavy swell. I lay down on my back in the cabin (for there were no berths), which, as soon as the mail-train arrived at eleven with the passengers, was full of people, and I never had a more uncomfortable night. I lay in one posture till we had fairly cast anchor in the port of Ostend, with my bones and flesh aching as if I had been beaten. On opening my eyes and sitting up I found that my next neighbour was Count A——, who had passed a terrible night, and who looked anything but the Adonis he strives to appear in the drawing-room. We started from Ostend at seven o'clock in the morning, and got to Cologne at nine at night, where we found ourselves with all the discomfort of reaching a strange town without knowing the language, and the little *contretemps* at the baggage-office upset my temper. The trials of my temper were increased when, on driving with an omnibus-load of fellow-passengers to the best hotel, we found there not a bed to be had, and so we had to hunt about the town till nearly ten o'clock, when we took refuge in a not first-rate hotel; the dining-room, where we took a cup of tea, was filled with Germans, with beards on their chins and pipes in their mouths, playing cards and dominoes. However, a night's rest has restored my equanimity again. The crowd of travellers, particularly English, exceeds all past experience. It is lucky for me that I have a comfortable reception awaiting me at Frankfort."

"*Frankfort, Aug.* 23. („)—We yesterday held our first sitting of the Congress, in the same place where the German Parliament assembled. It is a large church of a semicircular form, newly fitted up and decorated with flags, and capable of holding 3000 persons. It was well filled during

the day. The number of delegates and visitors to the Congress is about 500 or 600; but by far the largest portion are English. However, we have some good names from France. Cormenin (Conseiller d'Etat) and Emile de Girardin are both here, and spoke yesterday. Cormenin read a speech full of point, as everything is which comes from his pen. Amongst other 'spiritual' things, he said, 'there is one thing which all will admit to be far more impossible than the putting an end to war, viz. to put an end to *death*, and why should we not use half as much exertion to escape war as to escape death?' 1850. ÆT. 46.

"Strange to say we had Haynau, the Austrian general, sitting in the meeting. He is staying at a hotel here. I took the opportunity, in my speech, of alluding to the fact of having met him and Klapka at the two last peace meetings I had attended. He is a tall man, with a pair of white moustaches, which come down to his shoulders. His aspect is not prepossessing. I suspect there is some truth in the remark of a lady of Pesth, who expressed an opinion that he was not always in his right senses. Upon the whole, I am very well satisfied with the meeting. We are gaining ground."

"*Nov.* 9. (*To G. Combe.*)—I am afraid you overrate the importance of our Manchester educational conference.[1] The difficulties in the way of success are not much diminished

[1] Cobden had no sooner returned from the Peace Congress than he threw himself once more into the long and intricate struggle for National Education. He went to the most important centres of population, where he sought private interviews with bodies of men who were interested in the question, procuring a full and free discussion of vexed topics which were usually conducted with the heat and bitterness peculiar to sectarian quarrels. The Churchmen had moved a step forward; they no longer claimed a monopoly of grants from the State: they now proposed that all the denominations should receive public money for their religious teaching. It was a proposal, as Cobden said, by which everybody should be called upon to pay for the religious teaching of everybody else. This led to the conference at Manchester, January 22, 1851.

1850. ÆT. 46. since I wrote to you to excuse my apparent apathy. I want standing-ground for the House of Commons. At present the Liberal party, the soul of which is Dissent, are torn to pieces by the question, and it is not easy to heal a religious feud. The Tories, whatever they may say to the contrary, are at heart opposed to the enlightenment of the people. They are naturally so from an instinct of self-preservation. They will therefore seek every pretence for opposing us. If I could say I represented the Radical party or any other party upon the question, I should have some standing-ground in the House. But the greatest of all causes has no *locus standi* in Parliament. I thought I had given time to Mr. Baines and his dissenting friends to get cool upon the subject. But they appear to be as hot as ever. However, I shall now go straight at the mark, and shall neither give nor take quarter. I have made up my mind to go for the Massachusetts system as nearly as we can get it.[1] You would be puzzled at my objecting to the word 'secular.' If I had seen, before I spoke upon the subject, that the word occurred again in the body of the resolution, I should not have taken the objection; for, after all, the words of Shakspeare, 'What's in a name?' apply very much to this case. We all mean the same thing, *to teach the people something necessary for their well-being, which the ministers of religion do not teach them.* I perceive a difficulty in arguing the case if we profess to exclude the Bible from all schools. I would rather take the Massachusetts ground, and say that no book shall be admitted into the schools which favours the doctrines of any particular religious sect; but this in a Protestant country could hardly be said to include the Bible.

[1] That is to say education provided from local rates, free, compulsory, and secular in the sense of excluding books that teach the doctrine of any particular sect. The plan which Cobden favoured was after twenty years of lost time practically accepted, with the important exception that elementary instruction is not yet gratuitous.

In the Lancashire public school plan, it was proposed to have extracts from the scriptures only, and this was the best mode of meeting the difficulty in a county where there are so many Roman Catholics. But this is very different from the case of Rutland, where there is not probably a Catholic, and certainly more than half the parishes of England and Wales are in the same predicament. Still I do not shut my eyes to the fact that we shall be accused of teaching religion, just as certainly as we should be charged with irreligion if we excluded the Bible. However, there is the Massachusetts plan and its effects to fall back upon, and we must trust to time and discussion to put matters right in this country."

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"*Manchester, Thursday, Nov.* 22. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—I have come over here to attend a private meeting of the School Committee, and shall go to Birmingham to-morrow to pass a day or two with Sturge, and see Chance's glass works, and Fox and Henderson's establishment. I hope you will come to Birmingham and attend both the Freehold Land Society and the Peace Meeting, if for no other purpose, to let the fools and knaves who are raising this Guy Fawkes outcry, know that there are people in the country who are thinking of something more important than the Queen's spiritual supremacy.

"I should like you to speak against the consecrating of the banners, and if you found your audience all right, it would be a glorious thing to be able to rebuke the Protestant bigots, and say a word for the religious rights of a fourth of the population of the Empire. What a disgusting display is this Cockney no-Popery cry, headed by Johnny Russell, who bids fair to close his political career in the character of a religious persecutor. The end of it will be a reaction in favour of the Roman Catholics, and increased strength to their priesthood, which I don't wish to see. In

the meantime the old sore is opened in Ireland, and there is a new lease for Guy Fawkes, and the 'Immortal memory'— and my cynical brother will be confirmed in his doctrine that we are, after all, not progressive creatures, but only revolving in a circle of instincts. Verily we have not made great strides during the last two centuries in religious toleration."

"*Feb.* 15. (*To J. Sturge.*)—Is there no way of bringing out a declaration from the friends of religious equality in Birmingham against the Whig Bill for inflicting pains and penalties upon the Roman Catholics? Birmingham was the first to give a check to the public meetings in the North. Could it not have the honour of taking the lead in promulgating a sound declaration of opinion against all interference by the legislature in the religious concerns of the people? I should like to see a declaration put forth repudiating the rights of the Parliament to encourage by temporal rewards, or to discourage by temporal penalties, the progress of any religious opinions. Surely the mass of the people of Birmingham are favourable to this principle; it is in fact the principle of religious liberty which all parties profess to advocate, but so few are prepared to practise. Suppose you were to call a few friends together and take their advice as to whether anything can be done. We are going back rapidly in the House, and unless helped from without, our case is hopeless."

"*London, Feb.* 19. („)—I expect that this no-Popery cry will prove fatal to the Ministry. It is generally thought that the Government will be in a minority on some important question, probably the income-tax, in less than a fortnight. The Irish Catholic members are determined to do everything to turn out Lord John. Indeed Ireland is in such a state of exasperation with the Whigs, that no Irish member having a Catholic constituency will have a chance

of being elected again unless he votes through thick and thin to upset the Ministry. We may have a dissolution this spring, and if either party should be wicked enough to raise the No-Popery cry, Heaven only knows what the result may be. One thing is certain; the Irish Catholics will send none but Catholics, and they will hold the balance of power in the House, and if they were sixty Quakers instead of Irish Catholics, they would dictate terms to any Ministry. This unsettled state of parties makes it more important that we should raise the banner of religious equality."

"*Feb.* 25. (*To J. Parkes.*)—The Ecclesiastical Titles Bill is the real cause of the upset of the Whig coach, or rather of the coachman leaping from the box to escape an upset.[4] This measure cannot be persevered in by any Government so far as Ireland is concerned, for no Government can exist, if fifty Irish members are pledged to vote against them under all circumstances when they are in danger. A dissolution would give at least fifty members to do that work, and they would be all watched as they are now by their constituents. Probably a bishop or two would be sent up to town to keep them in the true fold, and see that they did not fall into the hands of the Treasury shepherd.

"This mode of fighting by means of adverse votes in the House is far more difficult to deal with by our aristocratic rulers, than was the plan of O'Connell when he called his monster meetings. They could be stopped by a proclamation or put down by soldiers, but neither of these modes

[4] Ministers were defeated on a private member's Bill to lower the county franchise to 10*l.*, which they opposed. On Feb. 22 it was announced that Lord John Russell had resigned. Lord Stanley was sent for, but gave up the task. The Peelites were the difficulty. Without them there could be no strong Government. They declined to join Lord Stanley from differences as to commercial policy, and their vigorous disapproval of the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill prevented them from joining Lord John Russell. After a short interregnum Lord John and his colleagues returned to office.

1851. will avail in the House. What folly it was to give a real
ÆT. 47. representation to the Irish counties, and to think of still maintaining the old persecuting ascendency.[a]

"I do not see how Lord John and the Whigs are to recover from the false position into which they have been flung by his letter and his speech. They have traded for the last fifteen years as a political party upon Irish questions; but now that capital is exhausted. Even if they withdrew their measure, which is hardly possible, it would not restore them to the confidence of the Irish. They are in a regular mess, and I do not see any way out of it for them. It is understood that Graham refuses to join the Whigs. He is against the Papal outcry, and walked out of the House on the first reading.

"Now all this is a good ground for your getting up a demonstration against the Bill. It must be withdrawn, whether you take a part or not. But it is very desirable that the English people should be known by the Irish to have taken a part in ridding them of this insulting measure."

"*March* 13. (*To Mr. W. R. Greg.*)— . . . . I doubt the policy of interfering in the Caffre business until we have more authentic news; the proper cure for these recurring wars is to let the colonists bear the brunt of them. This must be done by first giving them the powers of self-government, and then throwing on them the responsibility of their own policy. They would then be very careful to

[a] Cobden is here at the very heart of the deplorable tale of English mismanagement of Ireland since Catholic Emancipation. We invited the Irish to send representatives of their wishes and views to Parliament, but, until to a small extent in our own day, their views and wishes counted for nothing in the House of Commons. Of course the spirit of the Titles Bill was in miniature the same as the spirit of the Penal Code. Nothing could have been more nicely calculated to deepen Irish dislike for English supremacy, and Irish contempt for English professions of equality and tolerance.

treat the neighbouring savages with justice. At present it 1851.
is the interest of the colonists to provoke the natives into Æt. 47.
war, because it leads to a most profitable expenditure of British money."

"*March* 15. (*To Mr. E. Potter.*)—. . . As for politics, nobody can foresee for a week what will happen. Parties were a good deal confused before, thanks to Corn; but now the Catholic element has made confusion worse confounded. Of this be assured, all the embarrassments in the House, at Court, and in the Cabinet, have sprung out of the Papal question. It may suit the Whigs to abuse the Radicals, or make the Manchester school their whipping boys; but it is Lord Johnny's Durham letter and his Bill that are at the bottom of all the mischief. For the last fifteen years, ever since 1835, the Whigs, when in power, have depended for their political existence upon the votes of the Irish members. If that support had been at any time withdrawn in consequence of a Durham letter, they must have gone out of office. And they must go out now. The only thing that keeps them in, is the impossibility of finding anybody to take their places. In fact, it is difficult to see who is to govern. Any Government that perseveres in the anti-Papal policy will be opposed by the Irish members on every subject, and if an Administration were to come in to do nothing against the Pope, they would, I suppose, be turned out by the English. So that we are in a rather considerable fix.

"I will back the Irish to win, though they have long odds against them, because they have right and justice on their side. In fact, we are exhibiting ourselves in this year of the Exhibition as the most intolerant people on earth. Europe cries shame on us, and America laughs at us. Our course is that of the dog in the manger. We will not come to an agreement with the Pope, as the Emperor of

1851. Russia does, by which he has a voice in the appointment of
ÆT. 47. the Roman Catholic bishops in his Polish provinces (his Ireland), nor will we allow the Irish to manage their own spiritual affairs without our aid or intervention, as is done in the United States. Was ever anything so absurdly unjust? Well may our statesmen, such as Graham, Aberdeen, and so on, decline to take office to carry out such a system. I will venture to say that there is not a leading statesman in any country of Europe or America, who would for a moment take upon himself the responsibility of treating seven millions of Catholics as we are doing.

"As respects the prospects of Free Trade they are safe enough if we can have an appeal to the country upon that question 'pure and simple.' But if the Protectionists can throw in the religious cry, heaven only knows what may be the consequence. All I can say is that if the people are determined to indulge their bigotry even at the cost of a tax on their bread, it is their affair and not mine. I shall as resolutely oppose Protestant monopoly as Protectionist monopoly.

"I am glad to hear such good accounts of you. I would not advise you to come to Parliament, although I should like to have you on the same bench with me. For my part I am so disgusted with these theological squabbles that I should be delighted if I could bolt out of the political ring. But there is no such luck."

"*Dunford, April* 22. (*To Mrs. Cobden.*)—I left Chichester with Elcome yesterday, in the midst of rain, and it has been raining ever since. I can hardly see the trees on the side of the hill leading up to Walker's, and the Downs are quite lost in the thick mist. I am of course a prisoner, which is very disagreeable. Yesterday, whilst at Chichester, I was very extravagant in the purchase of a great number of roses in pots, which I expect to arrive to-day, and I shall

have them taken out of the pots and placed in the garden. 1851.
They are all of the autumn perpetual kinds. I intend to ÆT. 47.
have a bed of them on the rising ground just at the end of the house, not coming forward too far to interfere with the view of the Downs. I shall also have a bed in the front of the house. We shall shine in roses. The hollies and evergreens are still looking rather sorry and downcast. But, probably, with dry warm weather we shall soon see an improvement. The temperature is mild, and the wheats are looking vigorous. The nightingale and cuckoo are already heard in the hanger, and the foliage of the woods is assuming a lively hue. I long for the time when we can be here with the children in the autumn. You will enjoy it beyond measure."

"*May* 21. (*To Mr. W. R. Greg.*)—What the Whig Government intend to do I know not.[6] But of this I am quite sure, that if they do not intend to bring forward a measure calculated to excite some enthusiasm in the country, they had better leave us as we are, to fight the battle upon the Free Trade question. In my opinion, no measure will rouse the middle class, or have the slightest chance of meeting any response from the county constituency, unless the ballot form a part of it; and I fear that Lord John will flinch from that. The present system is worn out. There must be a new departure taken, with a better crew on board the Government vessel, and an avowed and definite destination in view. Until this fresh start be taken, we shall be in a transition state, and even when we get a reformed Parliament and an enlarged constituency, it may take a long time to enable the people to make up their minds what they shall do with their power. I am not sanguine (since the

[6] This refers to the Ministerial proposals, which were in various shapes before the public from this time until the Crimean War, for parliamentary reform.

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papal outburst) of living to see the political millennium which some people expect from another Reform Bill. But I repeat, the present system is come to a dead-lock, and whether for good or evil, the people must be called in to give a preponderance to one or the other political scale."

This year the first Great Exhibition was opened. I cannot find that Cobden was in any way responsible for the excessive importance which was so irrationally attributed to this once famous enterprise. He did not believe that it marked the arrival of a pacific transformation, but he thought that he might take people sufficiently at their word to propose to the House of Commons that the Foreign Minister should be recommended to open negotiations with France for a reduction of armaments He stipulated for nothing specific; he only urged that an effort in this direction should be made at a time which seemed in every respect so incomparably propitious. Lord Palmerston hastened with virtuous alacrity to give a cordial adhesion to the general tendency of his honourable friend's views, but would prefer to be left with his hands free. Other members followed, showing in bright colours what a noble spectacle we should set to mankind, if a solemn resolution of Parliament should commission the Foreign Secretary to say openly to France, "We desire peace, and ask you to aid us in that great work." All this was the fashionable mood of the hour, just as declamatory panic was the mood of the hour after. There was no hypocrisy in either case. The instability arose from the omission of influential statesmen to keep in their minds a systematic survey of the facts of our national position in relation to Foreign Powers. There was no real basis consistently present to the legislature or the public, to justify their occasional fits of pacific profession. Cobden had no illusions as to the real progress of his opinions, but the fewer his illusions, the more strongly he felt bound to persevere.

It was not to be expected that Cobden would be able to speak so freely as he was accustomed to do on military and naval matters, without touching that susceptibility which is common to all experts, and to experts in these two great services more even than in others. He often received insolent letters from officers who resented public discussions as private affronts. In 1850 a certain captain, whose operations in Borneo Cobden had spoken of as being of the nature of piracy, sent him a challenge to fight a duel. Cobden replied that if the writer repeated the offence, he would hand him over to the police. Vivacious journalists instantly taxed him with inconsistency. If he was for non-resistance, universal disarmament, and peace-at-any-price, with what decency could he talk of an appeal to the police? This folly was an excellent specimen of the criticism which Cobden was accustomed to receive at the hands of more responsible personages than the humorists of the press. In the same year an Admiral in high position entered into a hostile correspondence with him on the ground of something which Mr. Bright was wrongly reported to have said. Cobden replied that his correspondent must expect like all public men to have his conduct freely canvassed, and that if he had so little control over his temper that he must needs challenge one member of the legislature to mortal combat because another member was reported to have made a mistake of a single word in a speech of an hour's length, or because a reporter's pen may have slipped at a critical moment, then the Admiral had mistaken his vocation, and ought to retire from the public service. Cobden's reply was too direct to be courteous, but the provocation was sharp.

We may now proceed to correspondence of a graver kind, principally with Mr. Bright:—

"*Sept.* 29. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—I have been looking out for signs and omens of the political future, but cannot say I see

1851. any indications of a breeze in the direction of Reform. People
ÆT. 47. are too well-to-do in the world to agitate for anything. Did you ever know or read of any movement for organic change when wheat was under 40*s.*, to say nothing of cotton at 4*d.*? I am willing to do my share in the House or out of it, as an individual; but when you suggest a Conference under the auspices of Wilson and ourselves in Manchester, it is well to consider whether we may not be under the risk of deceiving ourselves or misleading others as to the meaning of such a step.

"If we move together at the head of an organization, it will be assumed that we are going to bring the League following with us. This will be a delusion practised upon people at a distance, and probably upon ourselves; for depend on it, we shall not carry with us those who co-operated with us in that struggle. Since I have been down here [Midhurst], I have been amusing myself under an old yew-tree by looking over several bushels of old letters which I received during the League agitation. The names of all those who did the work of that seven years' struggle are fresh in my memory. *Do not deceive yourself; the same men will not fight the battle of Parliamentary Reform.* If we go into the conflict, we must seek for recruits from amongst another class. Let this be understood beforehand by ourselves and the public; otherwise we do harm to all parties, by misleading the country and ourselves.

"But is it not a proof that the country is not ripe for a really great measure of Reform, that there is no spontaneous movement for it? In all great movements, new men spring up. *They* are the vouchers for the reality of the public interest in the Reform in question. When the Catholics were ready to free themselves, it was so. When the days of the Corn Law were numbered, it was so. But where are the men who now ask you and me and Wilson to put our-

selves at their head, to effect another Reform of Parliament? . . . . Where are the influential local men who are guarantees for the earnestness of any considerable body of reliable partisans throughout the kingdom? We are bound to look about us for some security of the kind. Nay, as practical men of this world, we should be guilty of a wanton waste of the little moral influence we possess, if we did not take a calm survey of the prospects of support before plunging into a fresh agitation. Lopez may be pitied, or blamed, according as people believe him to have had the opportunity of knowing beforehand the opinion of the Cuban population; but nobody will ever excuse you or me for miscalculating the force of public opinion upon any question.

"We can learn what the people want, if we take the trouble and the time to inquire. I confess that before I embark in any formal proceeding, I should like to have better evidence than I have hitherto had of the determination of the public to carry a thorough measure of Reform. To judge by appearances, nobody cares about it. There may be a change. When the breeze stirs, I think I shall perceive the ripple on the water as soon as anybody.

"I am not, as you suppose, desponding about political progress. I have faith in the onward tendency of our species. Not even the red cloaks of the Manchester aldermen can bring me to my cynical brother's doctrine, that we move in a circle of instincts, and return after a given cycle to the old starting-place (I admit, however, that the cloaks are a great triumph for his theory). If we are not now moving onward with great velocity, it is because we made a great rush for the goal of Free Trade, and the country has hardly yet recovered its breath sufficiently for a fresh start. But there is no danger of our standing still or becoming stagnant. The repeal of the Corn Law was a severe dose of alterative

1851. medicine, which is working by a self-acting process a gradual
Æt. 47. change in the body politic. It may take time, but the effects are sure. I am living in a part of the country where I can witness its operations."

"*Midhurst, Oct.* 1. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—Your letter of the 25th has only to-day come to hand, without any explanation of the cause of the delay.

"I observe that you are hopeful of aid from Baines and Co. Have you seen the *Mercury* of Saturday? It is lukewarm, or less tepid even than that! Gives the go-bye to the ballot, opposes our honest redistribution because it would give an 11th of the representation to London, and objects to household suffrage with the old and perverse plea that it would give a preponderance to the agricultural districts.

"By the way, with reference to what you heard from —— about the register. I may here say that my mind is made up not to stand again for the West Riding. I shall take an early opportunity of announcing my intention. Apart from the Free Trade question, I don't see what *principle* I could represent in the West Riding. If Baines be a representative of the opinions of the influential Liberals of the Riding, we are as wide as the poles asunder upon the vital questions of the day. I will sit for no place where the constituency will not back me in an active opposition to all invasions of the principle of religious equality. That question stands in my judgment before that of commercial freedom. And seeing how the majority of dissenting politicians have violated the rights of conscience by supporting the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, I feel by no means certain that I shall find any constituency which will return me on my own terms, about which, however, I feel no nervous anxiety. I see nothing but party animosity and political tergiversation in prospect in the House for some years to come.

"I agree with you to the letter in all you say about Ireland. There is no doubt that the land question (coupled with the Church Establishment) is at the root of the evil. And here let me say that I go heartily with you in the determination to attack the land monopoly root and branch both here and in Ireland and Scotland. There is an article in this day's *Freeholder* ("Large and small Farms") which will show you that our minds are running in the same direction. Wherever the deductions of political economy lead I am prepared to follow. By the way, have you had time to read Bastiat's partly posthumous volume, 'Les Harmonies Economiques'? If not, do so; it will require a studious perusal, but will repay it. He has breathed a soul into the dry bones of political economy, and has vindicated his favourite science from the charge of inhumanity with all the fervour of a religious devotee.

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"But to return to the Land customs of this country. We have made no progress upon the subject of primogeniture during the last twenty years. Public opinion is either indifferent or favourable to the system of large properties kept together by entail. If you want a proof, see how every successful trader buys an estate, and tries to perpetuate his name in connexion with 'that ilk' by creating an eldest son. It is probably the only question on which, if an attempt were made to abolish the present system, France could be again roused to revolution; and yet we are in England actually hugging our feudal fetters! But we are a Chinese people. What a lucky thing it is that our grandmothers did not deform their feet *à la Chinoise!* if so, we should have had a terrible battle to emancipate women's toes. But, however unprepared the public may be for our views on the land question, I am ready to incur any obloquy in the cause of economical truth. And it is, I confess, on this class of questions, rather than on plans of

1851. organic reform, that I feel disposed to act the part of a
ÆT. 47. pioneer.

"The extension of the suffrage must and will come, but it chills my enthusiasm upon the subject when I see so much popular error and prejudice prevailing upon such questions as the Colonies, religious freedom, and the land customs of this country. I do not mean to say that these thoughts make me for an instant falter in my advocacy of the extension of the franchise, but they make me doubt whether I may not be better employed in trying to diffuse sound practical views, than in fighting for forms or theories of government which do not necessarily involve the fate of practical legislation at all. The greatest obstacle to any improvement or change in John Bull's sentiments just now is the egregious vanity of the beast. He has been so plastered with flattery, for which he seems to have an insatiable appetite, that he has become an impervious mass of self-esteem. Nothing is so difficult as to alter the policy of individuals or nations who allow themselves to be persuaded that they are the 'envy of surrounding nations and the admiration of the world.' Time and adversity can alone operate in such cases."

"*October* 29. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—I thought I had so repeatedly explained myself upon the Reform movement, that it must prevent any misunderstanding between us as to my meaning. I do not advocate our doing nothing. I am prepared to do something. We must all do our best. But the question, and the only question which I was discussing, is whether we shall call a conference in Manchester. That means in the eyes of the public that the men who call the Conference, and who put themselves at its head, are prepared to organize an agitation. Have we duly reckoned the chances of making Manchester the headquarters of a successful Reform movement? I doubt its success. A Conference would be only

justifiable in my opinion, after we had been requested to call one by the reformers of the several localities from which we should invite delegates. I have seen no symptoms of any such movement anywhere. I wish you to draw the distinction in your mind between our individual efforts in support of some such broad plan as Hume's, which I am prepared to make, and our calling a Conference in Manchester. Supposing the latter to be decided on, what will you do with Walmsley's great-little go? Will you join it and merge in it, or will you set up a distinct organization? If the former, you will avoid all responsibility; but you will perhaps give an apparent force to a society which has little real strength, and thus tend to foster the delusion that more is doing than is really being done by it. If the latter, you incur a great responsibility; you can only be justified in superseding his society, by the certainty of establishing something better. In any case, we shall for a time have two suns in the firmament trying to outshine each other. Unless we make a very grand flare-up indeed, we shall be charged with impotent jealousy in trying to injure Walmsley's concern, without being able to set up anything better. Now, none of these difficulties arise if we act *individually*, instead of calling a Manchester Conference.

"I have thus again explained my views. We may differ, but cannot misunderstand each other. Having had my say, I by no means wish it to be supposed that I would refuse to join you and Wilson in any such demonstration, if you decide to hold one. I shall be in the north before the middle of next month, and will come and pass a night at your house. I am, however, under an engagement to be present at a Freehold Land Society's Conference in London, on the 25th of November (Monday).

"I don't know how soon I may be with you. The Leeds people have invited Kossuth to attend a meet-

1851. ÆT. 47.

ing.[7] I don't know whether he will go. I have advised him from the first to be very chary in accepting invitations; but, if he should go there, I shall certainly be present. By the way, you will be curious to hear what sort of impression he made on me. Amiability, earnestness, and disinterestedness were the most speaking characteristics of the man. Speaking phrenologically, I should say he wants firmness; and the head is very small in the animal organs behind the ear. Altogether he did not impress me with a sense of his power to the extent which I had looked for. And yet he must possess it, for otherwise he could not have acquired an ascendency over the aristocratic party in his country, where judging by the specimens I have seen amongst the refugees, he was brought into competition with men of no ordinary stamp. The secret of his influence lies, I suspect, in his eloquence. His speech at Winchester, delivered within forty-eight hours of his arrival in England, in a language with which he could have had but little practical acquaintance, was the most extraordinary exploit I ever witnessed. I have no doubt that with forty-eight hours' preparation, and a supply of the necessary materials, he would make as good a financial statement in the House as any public man amongst us. The speech he delivered was suggested by myself, and was spoken without preparation.

"I have not seen a report of the proceedings at the Southampton banquet, but am anxious to see how Lawrence, the American Minister, will get through his part of sympathizing with the Austrian rebel, who deposed the house of Hapsburg in Hungary, and was a few weeks ago hung in effigy by command of the Austrian Government. How will these diplomatists, with their starched etiquette, ever survive such a violation of their conventional rules? Then how can the Austrian Minister remain at Washington

[7] Kossuth landed at Southampton, from Turkey, on October 23.

after the President has invited Kossuth to be his guest, and given orders for his reception with military honours? Assuredly, these Democrats are destined to turn the diplomatic world upside down. 1851. Ær. 47.

"You are quite right in saying that Palmerston wants to make political capital out of Kossuth. His tools have succeeded in getting a vote of thanks for him in Southampton, where the good folks have been in far too great a bustle to think of what they are doing. But you will have observed that Kossuth himself avoids saying anything in praise of Palmerston."

"*Nov.* 4. (*To F. W. Cobden.*)—It seems Kossuth will not go to Yorkshire, and I do not see the necessity of my attending the Manchester banquet. The *Times* has had a slap in the face which it will not soon forget or forgive. It has been fairly cowed by the universal execration it has brought upon itself. Yet what an absurd position we are in. So completely dictated to and domineered over by one newspaper, that it requires a periodical revolt of the whole people to keep the despot in tolerable order! If we had, as we might have, a dozen daily morning papers, of all prices, representing all opinions, and holding each other in check, there would be no necessity for these public meetings to protest against the misrepresentation of the press; which, so far as I take a part in them, are not the most safe or convenient, for one is always in danger of being identified with those who give vent in the excitement of the moment to very unsound and bellicose sentiments."

"*November* 7. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—As respects Sturge's plan of universal suffrage, although I am convinced we shall come to it some day, I do not think it would have so much support from the electoral body as household suffrage. And we are too apt to forget that the mass of the people, however enthusiastic in favour of universal suffrage, have not the

1851. power of carrying that or any other measure, excepting
ÆT. 47. with the aid of the middle class.

"Again, Sturge loses sight of the inequality of representation, which (even if we would risk the ballot) renders it quite impossible that we should make the Reform Bill a simple question of household or manhood suffrage. After all (you will say I am upon my hobby again) I look to the forty shilling freehold movement as the surest guarantee of our being able to break down the power of the aristocracy without an appeal to violence. A county or two quietly rescued from the landlords by this process will, when announced, do more to strike dismay into the camp of feudalism and inspire the people with the assurance of victory, than anything we could do. As respects the Whig programme, if the ballot be left out, I will not be a party to the scheme, and I feel quite sure that it will be left out."

"*Midhurst, Nov.* 6. („)—I guarded myself as carefully as ever I did in my life from being seduced into an unsound position at Winchester, and it is only a proof of the terrible powers of perversion possessed by the *Times* that *you* have been influenced by its comments on my speech. The word 'Stop' as applied to Russia was used first by Kossuth in his speech. He said he wished us only to say, *Stop*. In my remarks I alluded to the unsound state of public opinion here, and our own violations of the principle of non-intervention in our foreign policy. I also referred to the fact that when the Russians invaded Hungary, so much were we under the influence of those unsound opinions, that the tone of some of our leading papers was adverse to the Hungarian cause. I said, then let public opinion in England be set right by such speeches as we had just heard, and let us come into court with clean hands, by acting upon the principle of non-intervention ourselves, and let America

join us in the same course (though she has rather given symptoms of following our bad example), and then the word 'Stop' addressed to Russia would have the force of a thousand cannons. 1851. ÆT. 47.

"I had, of course, a good deal of private talk with him all in the same strain, and distinctly told him that I had no other hope for him but in the general adoption of the principle of non-intervention as a public opinion of the civilized world. And certainly he has done his part nobly in putting forward that principle in its fairest aspect. He tells us he does not want help, but he wishes us to secure him fair play. We say we wish fair play to him and all others struggling for what they hold to be their rights. Is not such a man, then, to have our sympathies? Are we to let him be slaughtered here by the *Times*, and stand silently by whilst worse than Turks are assassinating him morally? No; you are not the man to say so. But then you are afraid that others will push our doctrines to the point of physical force. Even if they do, that is no reason why we should cease to give moral power its only chance, by boldly proclaiming the right and justice of the Hungarians to settle their own domestic affairs. Now I am satisfied that if public opinion in England can be shown to be unmistakably against Russian invasion of Hungary, the Russian Government would no more think of risking a collision with the two most powerful maritime states, than Tuscany or Sardinia would; for she is, if possible, more at the mercy of those powers. Therefore, to avoid the possibility of war, let us give the fullest development and expression to sound public opinion.

"My own opinion is that we are on the eve of a revolution in the diplomatic world; that the old régime of mystification and innuendo and intrigue cannot survive the growth of the democratic principle; that diplomacy must be a

1851. public and responsible organization; and nobly again has
ÆT. 47. Kossuth assailed this stronghold of the hierarchical spirit. What could be better than when he said, 'Diplomacy tells us that the dinner is prepared and eaten, and we (the people) have nothing to do but to digest the consequences'? Then, again, his attacks upon the loaning system are quite in our spirit. In fact he comes here preaching the main principles enunciated at our Peace Congress, but preaching them better even in a foreign tongue than I could do in my own language; and surely such a man ought not to be slighted, although some of his admirers talk a little gunpowder.

"But the fact is that upon the whole the public addresses and speeches are singularly judicious, with the exception of the London Working Men's address, with which, of course, the working men had nothing to do. I join you heartily in wishing to guard us against being for a moment thought to be the advocates of war or armed intervention, and am equally convinced with yourself that we have nothing to hope from Palmerston and Co. One of my reasons for hoping much from Kossuth's agitation here and in America is that it will tend to unveil Foreign Ministers and put Foreign Offices in order.

"By the way, with reference to your difficulties about speaking, I should expect that Kossuth will prefer that nobody speaks but himself. After having such a rule adopted by the London Working Men's Committee, it would be invidious to depart from it in Manchester. I know it is his wish that nobody speaks in his presence unless he is the guest of the chairman, as at Southampton. So if you like to suggest to the Committee that Kossuth should receive addresses and make a reply, and that nobody else should speak, I know that would be most agreeable to him."

"*Dunford, Nov.* 13. („)—I have only time for a few words to save the post after reading your speech, to say how

greatly I admire your sentiments and approve the line of argument you took at the great Kossuth meeting. I can fully appreciate the difficulties of a peace man standing before such a meeting, full of the most generous indignation at the oppressors of a people so nobly represented by the great Magyar. If you could have moved there and then a declaration of war against Russia and Austria, it would have perhaps been the resolution which would have most perfectly embodied the feelings of three-fourths of those present. But your remarks will bear the test of time and reflection, which I should think would hardly be the case with the rev. gentlemen who fell foul of your peace principles. By the way, if I rightly understand what Dr. Vaughan said, he took credit for Palmerston for having prevented the Sultan from surrendering Kossuth by promising him material help. Now, you will find on referring to Palmerston's speech on Roebuck's Greek Debate, that in speaking of the entry of our fleet into the Dardanelles, he himself informed us that the Emperor of Russia withdrew his demand for the extradition of the Refugees on the arrival of the Sultan's envoy remonstrating against the demand, and *before any intelligence had reached Petersburgh of the views of the English Government.* But I remember at the time making the calculation, and finding that the newspapers of London and Paris, giving one unanimous expression from all parties and every shade of opinion, of indignation at the attempt of the northern powers to violate the law of nations in the persons of Kossuth and his companions, reached Petersburgh at the same time with the Turkish envoy, and I felt convinced, and I said as much in the House afterwards, that it was that expression of OPINION from Western Europe scared the despots instantly from their prey. And you are quite right; it is opinion and opinion only that is wanting to establish the principle of non-intervention as a law of

1851. nations, as absolutely as the political refugee in a third and
ÆT. 47. neutral country is protected now by the law of nations. But these people who bawl for soldiers and sailors to settle these matters, forget that we have a great deal to do to settle opinion amongst ourselves before we go to war to make others conform to a principle which we have not yet agreed upon. Was public opinion in England unanimously expressed against Russian intervention in 1849? Turn back to the columns of the *Times* and *Manchester Guardian* for an answer. . . . .

"I know that Kossuth was most indignant on reading the blue-books (at Kutayah) giving the correspondence about the Hungarian struggle, for Pulsky told me at the time that K. had discovered to his surprise that the whole moral force of our diplomacy at Vienna was employed against him, and that Palmerston at the close of the struggle wrote to congratulate the Austrian government upon the termination of the war. . . . ."

"*Nov.* 16. (*To Mr. Ashworth.*)—Kossuth is most certainly a phenomenon; not only is he the first orator of the age, but he combines the rare attributes of a first-rate administrator, high moral qualities, and unswerving courage. This is more than can be said of Demosthenes or Cicero. I am glad to see by your letter that you have participated in the pleasure of listening to him. I confess I felt intensely interested in the success of his visit, after the base and brutal attempt of the *Times* to destroy his character, before even he had alighted on our shores. The generous welcome given to him is I believe not altogether undue to the dastardly attacks made on him by that paper, which has received a lesson not easily to be forgotten or forgiven. The tone of the addresses and speeches delivered at the meetings has been very discreet and moderate. There has been some gunpowder vomited forth, particularly by a reverend gentle-

man in Manchester, which might have been better spared for a fitter occasion. What we want is a sounder public opinion upon the question of national rights and the sovereignty of peoples. If we could make up our own minds, as a community, that the Russian intervention in Hungary was a violation of the independence of a nation, we should not require to threaten war to make our opinion influential. But what *were* the facts, and what *are* now the facts? At the time when the Czar moved his army across the Carpathians, not only were we not agreed as a people in condemning the act, but the *Times*, *Guardian*, and all the Tory papers, took a view of the intervention favourable to Russia. Even Lord Palmerston, in the House, spoke apologetically of it. And even now the *Times* leans to the same side. The whole of the Tory party and the aristocracy are holding aloof from the Kossuth demonstration. It is clear that we want an enlightened and reformed opinion upon the subject of non-intervention. Kossuth has done much to change the tone, and I think if 1849 had now to be gone through again, there would be such a demonstration of opinion as would scare Nicholas from his prey. But there is still very much to be done, and I can imagine nothing more calculated to retard the progress of sound public opinion than to invite the people to embark in a fresh war in favour of Hungarian liberty."

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CHAPTER XXII.

THE PROTECTIONISTS IN OFFICE.

1852.
ÆT. 48.

THE signal victory which Lord Palmerston had gained in the summer of 1850, was followed before the close of the following year by what looked to everybody but himself like a crushing repulse. His rapid and peremptory way of doing the business of his office had never been agreeable to the Court. The substantial aims of his policy had been in most instances extremely disagreeable to some of the continental personages with whom the English Court was on terms more or less close. In these high quarters, therefore, he was no favourite. At the very moment of his triumph, the Queen transmitted to him a rebuke for neglect of consideration and observance towards the Crown, so sharply worded that when it became public, men looked upon it as an affront not to be borne, and wondered that a Minister of Lord Palmerston's spirit should not have met it by instant resignation. He did not take this course, because, in his own words, to have resigned then would have been to give the fruits of victory to adversaries whom he had defeated, and to abandon his supporters at the very moment when by their means he had just triumphed. It was not long, however, before he rashly gave his enemies their opportunity. When the President of the French Republic struck his blow against the Assembly, Lord Palmerston thought that he had done what was right and expedient, and frankly said as much in

talking to the French Ambassador in London. Reference 1852.
was made to the conversation in an official despatch from Æт. 48.
Paris. The despatch came in due course before the Queen and the Prime Minister. It was conceived that Lord Palmerston's expression of opinion on the President's action, before consultation with his colleagues, was a violation of prudence and decorum which showed him to be unfit for his post. Lord John Russell in a summary manner dismissed him from office; and in the debate which afterwards took place upon the matter in the House of Commons, was generally held at the time to have amply justified the dismissal. Hasty observers made up their minds that Lord Palmerston's career was at an end.

Lord Palmerston himself took a very different view. He reckoned confidently that the nation would not forget his power in foreign affairs. He knew that it did him more good than harm to figure as the victim of the Germanism of the Court. He saw that the press of the country was almost boisterously on his side. Finally, he perceived like everybody else that the Ministry could not get through the session, and would probably not stand long after the meeting of Parliament.[1] His opportunity came within a few days. He had his tit-for-tat with John Russell—so he wrote—and turned him out by carrying an amendment in the Militia Bill, which the Minister took as a vote of want of confidence. Lord John Russell immediately resigned (February 23), and the first administration of the Earl of Derby took the place of the last administration of pure Whigs.

In Cobden's eyes the policy of the Militia Bill, and the accession to power of the Protectionists, were equally startling and equally ill-omened. One event certainly showed a revival of the military spirit, and the other for some time was seriously believed to threaten a reaction against Free

[1] See Mr. Ashley's *Life of Lord Palmerston*, ii. 218.

1852. Trade. Cobden made a vigorous speech against the proposal for organizing the militia, contending that we should be amply protected by our navy, if our ships were not systematically sent abroad. He denied the reasonable probability of invasion, appealing to Lord John Russell's emphatic declaration on the first night of the session, that the relations of peace existed between this country and foreign nations in the fullest degree. Why should we suddenly act as if a remote and highly improbable contingency were an assured certainty? This point of view was not agreeable to the majority, and all that Cobden took by his protest was the assurance from a member on his own side that he was labouring under a monomania which deprived the country of the services of a very clever man. Cobden knew very well what price he and his friends might expect to pay for standing aloof from either of the two great factions, and refusing to echo the conventional cries of the political market-place. In the course of the previous year he had told a great meeting of Liberals at Manchester how he stood. Spiteful newspapers had begun to talk of him as a disappointed demagogue. "This disappointed demagogue," he said, "wants no public employment; if I did, I might have had it before now. I want no favour and no title. I want nothing that any Government or any party can give me; and if I am in the House of Commons at all, it is to give my feeble aid to the advancement of certain questions on which I have strong convictions." If they deprived him of this power, if they told him not to do this because it was likely to destroy a Government with which he could have little sympathy, then the sooner he betook himself to something more profitable than sitting up in the House of Commons night after night, the better both for himself and his friends.[1]

ÆT. 48.

If Cobden found little support from either the House of

[1] Manchester, Feb. 23, 1851.

Commons or the country for his opinions on war and armaments, he was compensated in part by finding that upon Free Trade at any rate there was no backsliding in either the press or the constituencies. The new Government professed to leave the question of Protection open until it should be convenient to appeal to the country. This made it impossible for the Free Traders to do anything but oppose them. If the Ministers were not for a Corn Law, Mr. Bright told them, let them say so. If one of them were authorized boldly to avow that the time had gone by when any duty could be imposed upon corn, and to promise that they would not tamper with the taxation with a view to compensate certain classes for losses alleged to be due to Free Trade, then the Government should certainly never find him voting a want of confidence in them. The same rather bitter but perfectly intelligible indifference of the Manchester school to the ties which nominally connected them with the official world, shows itself pretty clearly in Cobden's letters during this long crisis :—

"*House of Commons, Feb.* 28. (*To George Wilson.*)—Whilst I am writing, Stanley [Lord Derby] is still speaking, but from what I hear, his plan is to hold the Corn question in suspense, on the plea of other grave Parliamentary affairs, and admitting himself in a minority in the Commons, to do nothing unless forced to a dissolution by what he calls a factious opposition. The House of Commons is always afraid of a dissolution, and this threat may not be without its influences on Members. But it appears to me that our course is clear. We must not allow the country to be kept both in its agricultural and manufacturing interests in hot water and confusion for a year. We must challenge to instant combat, and memorialize the Queen from all parts of the country to dissolve. This will give courage and confidence to our friends, and prevent the Members of the

1852. House from temporizing. We have everything to fear from
ÆT. 48. delay. Popular enthusiasm cools, and the enemy being in power will be sharpening the sword with which to slay us as soon as we are off guard. Let no other question be mixed up with ours. The country will not entertain other reforms until our question is disposed of."

"*London, Feb.* 28. („)—Further reflection, and the perusal of Lord Derby's speech, have confirmed me in my views. We must go for memorials to the Queen for a dissolution. We must mix up no other question with it, because no other will interest the public till it is settled. We may talk of Reform in Parliament, but I would have no resolution excepting upon our own question. There should be one resolution affirming our determination to renew the League agitation, if necessary to maintain Free Trade inviolate; and another expressing the wish of the meeting for the interests of all concerned, to have the question for ever settled by an appeal to the country, and therefore praying the Queen to dissolve as soon as the forms of Parliament admit. I have my doubts yet, whether Lord Derby will dare to go to the country on the bread question; but if he should, he will find nine-tenths of the men, women, and children even in the rural districts dead against him. There is no doubt as to the result of a dissolution. Free Trade is stronger in the agricultural districts amongst the mass of the people, than you perhaps imagine in Manchester. There need not be too much sound and fury in our proceedings. The very apparition of the League will settle the question. In fact it is the only thing that all parties at headquarters are afraid of."

A couple of days after this letter, the Council of the League met in their old quarters at Manchester. Crowds from all parts of the country thronged into the great room of Newall's Buildings, and as one familiar face after another was recognized, the assembly became almost as animated as

when the great struggle was at its height. Cobden moved the first resolution in a terse and pithy speech, Mr. Bright and Mr. Gibson followed, and before the meeting was over, the men in the room thoroughly understood one another and what was to be done; a large sum of money had been subscribed; and the plan of the electoral campaign had been determined upon and prepared.[1]

"*Manchester, March* 3. (*To Mrs. Cobden.*)—The meeting was all I could wish in point of influence, numbers, and earnestness. But it struck me that people with difficulty realise in their minds the necessity of another effort to secure Free Trade. However the blow will I expect tell decisively."

"*March* 5. („)—The feeling in the West-Riding of Yorkshire is most intense amongst the working class. They will never allow the Corn Law to be reimposed."

"*London, March* 11. (*To Mr. Sturge.*)—I am not sure that I correctly interpret your letter to mean that you prefer to let Lord Derby remain in office for fear of seeing back the Whigs. My object is to settle the Free Trade question for ever, and to clear the ground for other questions. If in

[1] Cobden usually tried to get one salient fact into a speech. On this occasion he mentioned a fact that he described as comprising almost their main case:—"Since the day when we laid down our arms there has been imported into this country in grain and flour of all kinds an amount of human subsistence equal to upwards of 50,000,000 of quarters of grain—a larger quantity than had been imported from foreign countries during the thirty-one years preceding 1846—that is, from the peace of 1815 down to the time at which we brought our labours to a close. Now, gentlemen, in that one fact is comprised our case. You have had, at the lowest computation, 5,000,000 of your countrymen, or countrywomen, or children, subsisting on the corn that has been brought from foreign countries. And what does that say? What does it say of the comfort you have brought to the homes of those families? What does it say of the peace and prosperity and security of domestic life in those homes, where 50,000,000 of quarters of grain extra have been introduced, and where, but for your exertions, the inmates might have been left either in hopeless penury or subsisting on potatoes?"

1852. doing so, I should be instrumental in bringing back the
Æt. 48. Whigs it would not be my fault. I have no such object in view, and agree with you in wishing they could remain in Opposition for the rest of their lives—or at least to the day of their reformation. Let us not however deceive ourselves by supposing that Lord Derby would be less inclined for the Militia than the Whigs. All the aristocratic parties and the Court are in favour of more armaments. Our business is to try to make the people of a different opinion; and when I say the people, I mean that public opinion which alone can enable us to break down the martial propensities of the Government. I am more and more convinced that we have much to do with the public, before we can with any sense or usefulnoss quarrel with this or that aristocratic party.

"I have watched naturally the tone of the press upon the late (as I think monstrous) proposal to increase our armaments. It is decidedly against us. I do not speak of the dailies, but of the weekly papers; and I do not allude to such papers as the *Examiner* or *Spectator*, but to the *Weekly Dispatch*, read by artisans and small shopkeepers, and the *Illustrated Weekly News*, a thorough middle-class print. By these and such as these I have been denounced and put out of the pale of practical statesmanship for opposing an increase of armaments. I care nothing for this, because I prefer to enjoy the pleasure of advocating my own views to the prospects of office. But how many public men who have ambition to gratify will range themselves alongside of us, so long as the press is thus opposed to them? To change the press, we must change public opinion. And, mind, when I speak of the press I speak of those weekly papers which are really supported by the people.

"Never was the military spirit half so rampant in this country since the Peace as at present. Look at the late

news from Rangoon.[4] Nobody inquires *why* we killed 300 Burmese. The papers applaud the deed without asking for a justification. This makes about 5400 persons killed by our ships in the East during the last five years, without our having lost one man by the butcheries! Now give me Free Trade as the recognized policy of all parties in this country, and I will find the best possible argument against these marauding atrocities. I will then demonstrate to all by their own admission that they cannot profit by such proceedings. To take away the motive of self-interest is, after all, the nearest way to influence the conduct of wicked human nature. *Therefore*, as the moral of this, I exhort you to give the finishing-stroke to Free Trade as the best means of advancing your peace principles."

"*March* 20. (*To J. Sturge.*)—As you will have seen by Lord Derby's speech in the Lords, the present Government will carry a Militia Bill if they can. It is the question upon which they will try to raise a discussion in the House with a view to gain time. And Lord John Russell and his party are so hampered with pledges upon the subject, that they cannot offer any opposition to at least an introduction of the measure. Therefore you must not relax in your efforts to prevent the scheme from being carried out. The invasion panic seems pretty nearly forgotten."

"*London, March* 20. (*To George Wilson.*)— . . . The Derby-Disraelites are not going to give up their berths in a hurry, and they would be fools if they did so, for they are opposed to an Opposition whose leaders have not the pluck (and Dizzy's insolence shows that he knows it) to stop the supplies. I have been in constant communication with Lord John and Graham, but they are not the men to strike the

[4] This was the beginning of the Second Burmese War, which Cobden dealt with in the following year in his pamphlet, *How Wars are got up in India*. See Collected Writings, vol. ii.

1852. ÆT. 48. blow, and we are powerless without them. The excuse they put forward is the fear that some of the Peel party and Palmerston will not join in a vote of want of confidence—such as limiting the supplies, and that we might be in a minority. I have urged upon them again and again that promptness and courage will carry everybody with them—that the members on our side of the House will for the sake of their elections vote for the Free Trade majority. But timidity carries the day. And so I suppose these men will be in office till November. In the meantime they will get rid of their Protectionist pledges, and try to reconstruct a Tory party—and as we, the present Opposition, are a rope of sand with an Irish party pledged against the Whigs, I see no reason why Derby should not have a fresh lease upon a Free Trade policy. Gladstone, Goulburn, Sidney Herbert, Palmerston, have more affinity for the Tories than for us, and nothing but Free Trade keeps us on the same benches. True, there will be one difficulty in the way of their making a party. What could they do with Disraeli, if Gladstone were on the same bench?

"There is now no doubt that the Protectionists are slipping away from their principles at a gallop, and we shall be in danger of wasting our strength in firing ball cartridges at a dead lion."

"*London, March* 23. („)—I have done all I possibly could with Lord John to induce him to act with more vigour. He is hampered with pledges and opinions given or expressed to the Queen or Lord Derby when he went out of office, which prevent him from taking a leading part in advocating an immediate dissolution of Parliament. And yet, as you will have seen, he is in no way inclined to let anybody else lead our side of the House.

"I have spoken in the same way to Sir James Graham, who has been in consultation with his colleagues of the late

Peel party, and I have a long letter from him explaining 1852.
why he thinks we must be content for the present with the ÆT. 48.
declaration of Lord Derby. He fears that some of his party would not vote for limiting the supplies for the military services. But they still leave it open to deal with the miscellaneous estimates, if the Government should be inclined to postpone unreasonably the appeal to the country. Last night, owing to the rapidity with which the money was voted there seemed to be an impression that we should dissolve early in May.

"What are you doing? You ought at once to make out a list of those places which are safe, and waste no attention or money on them. Then look to places like Sunderland, Liverpool, Lincoln, Boston, where there will be Protectionists standing, and there you ought to concentrate your strength by distribution of telling tracts and handbills. Not caricatures or poetry or sarcasm, but brief and pithy facts, for in those places people are not up to the mark. Pictorial tracts or handbills are good, but they should be pictorial facts, not caricatures."

"*May* 5. (*To J. Sturge.*)—I am not quite sure yet that we may not draw the sting from the Militia Bill, and make it so different a thing in Committee that its author may repudiate it. It is thought that the present Government is vexed at having to carry the measure through, and they will be far more sick of it before we have done with them. Last night, or rather this morning at one o'clock, in the heat of the strife Disraeli was drawn into another Protectionist avowal, which will embarrass him again. In fact the Militia Bill seems destined to bring no end of trouble upon all Governments who meddle with it, and we shall do our best to make the present ministers sick of their adopted child. It is the wretched Whigs alone who render such bad measures possible. But Lord John seems to have paid an ample penalty."

1852. ÆT. 48.

"*June* 9. („)—I admire your hopefulness, and must confess myself to be much disgusted and almost dismayed at the proceedings on the Militia Bill. I will never forgive the Whigs for this retrograde step. On analysing the division list, I find that in almost every case, where it was possible to bring public opinion to bear upon members, your party succeeded in preventing them from supporting the third reading. The majority was made up of county members (chiefly Protectionists) and the representatives of small pocket boroughs. This shows that if we had a fair representation, you could hold the military party in check. But you can do nothing without a change in the county representation, and there is no county that sends such bad members as that where you live."

The elections for a new Parliament extended over the month of July. Cobden and his Conservative colleague again divided the representation of the West Riding without a contest. Mr. Gibson and Mr. Bright won at Manchester by handsome majorities. Taken broadly the strength of parties had not shifted, and there was no approach to such a change as would have justified a reversal of the policy of Free Trade. The Government gained strength enough to resist a vote of want of confidence, if it should be proposed, but not strength enough to carry their measures. What shrewd observers like Lord Palmerston expected was that they would be beaten upon some fanciful scheme for relieving everybody without increasing anybody's burdens, "which would be speedily seen to be too mountebankish to be practicable."[1] This is what actually happened. Meanwhile Cobden and his friends did not relax their vigilance.

"*Midhurst, August* 18. (*To George Wilson.*)—If you have money in hand, would it not be well to keep it until we have fairly disposed of the Protectionist party? The

[1] Lord Palmerston, in Mr. Ashley's *Life*, ii. 247, 248.

Government ought to be driven to avow Free Trade opinions, 1852.
or be driven from office. It will not be easy to do either, ÆT. 48.
unless the League still shows a formidable front to all trimmers. We must not abandon the field whilst professing Protectionists hold office. The Government will be in a difficulty how to change their Protectionist garments for a Free Trade suit without breaking up their party. But our object is or ought to be to break up the County gang, which exists only upon the basis of Protection. Do not therefore throw away your balance, but keep it and let the world know that you have it."

"*Midhurst, Sept.* 14, 1852. (*To Mr. Sturge.*)—I hold, that before you can rationally hope to reduce the army or the navy, you must bring the public mind to agree to the abolition of the militia. And I should also, with all due deference say, that until we can recover this lost ground for the Peace party in England, it will be a little inconsistent in us to travel abroad to teach our doctrines to other nations. The establishment of the militia was a disastrous defeat sustained by the Peace party, and until we can regain our position of 1851, it is useless to think of getting back to 1835. How are we to take this step and thus recover our lost position? I repeat by acquiring some influence in the Counties, for it was by the votes of county members in opposition to a majority of the representatives of boroughs that the measure was passed. And if you have watched the announcements in the *Gazette* since the passing of the law, you must have seen the sinister influences which were at work to carry the Bill. Have you marked the shoal of deputy-lieutenants created as a part of the working machinery of the law? Every magistrate almost in these parts has been gazetted as a deputy-lieutenant, and is of course entitled to appear at Court with his official costume and cocked hat and feathers. Then have you observed the

1852. lists of appointments and promotions as officers of the
ÆT. 48. militia? There is quite a flood of flunkeyism and patronage in the counties. Lords Lieutenant are looking patronizingly upon the Squire; and the Squire's son is snobbishly looking up to his Lordship for a grade in the county militia. Then there is all the small patronage for printers, surgeons, lawyers, etc., with its necessary consequence of servility and demoralization on the part of all interested. The whole of the working of the militia is calculated to foster and strengthen an aristocratic system and to degrade the mass of the people."

Sept. 20. (*To Mr. Sturge.*)—The death of the Duke[6] would, one thinks, tend to weaken the military party. But, if the spirit survive, it will find its champions. After all if the country will do such work as Wellington was called on to perform, I don't know that it could find a more honest instrument. He hated jobs and spoke the truth (the very opposite of Marlborough), and although he grew rich in the service, it was by the voluntary contributions of the Parliament and Government. If he had been told to help himself at the Exchequer, his modesty and honesty would never have allowed him to take as much as was forced upon him. I, who saw with what frenzy of admiration he was welcomed by all classes at the Exhibition, can never honestly admit that in what the Legislature and Government had done for him, they had exceeded the wishes of the nation. Let us hope that a more rational sentiment may be promoted amongst us, but we are slow to learn. At this moment we are doing more than any other people to keep up the vast peace armaments of which we complain. . . . Can you in the face of such facts travel to the Continent to advocate a reduction of establishments?"

"*Midhurst, October* 4. (*To J. Wilson.*)—It having been

[6] The Duke of Wellington died on the 14th of September.

decided to hold a meeting,[7] there is nothing more to be said but to make the best of it. I think you are quite right in having determined to mix nothing with the Free Trade question. . . . . All the reflection I can give to the subject confirms me in the opinion that we ought to confine ourselves in the first instance to the settlement of the Free Trade question, without attempting to tie to that proceeding any ulterior plan whether of a personal or political nature. We are entitled to at least a Free Trade Government to represent the opinion of the country. If the present Administration do not avow themselves to have cast off their Protectionist opinions and to have adopted Free Trade views, they ought to be turned out. I would not be contented by their saying that they will not attempt to reverse the policy of Sir R. Peel 'because they have not the power to do so.' They must profess adhesion to that policy and recant their own errors; they must promise to promote and extend these principles; and failing in all this, we must by any legitimate means drive them into resignation. Can we do this? All depends upon the course taken by the Peel party, and I am glad to see by the tone of Henley's speech that the old bitterness of the Protectionists towards them still survives. Indeed, so long as Disraeli continues at the head of the Tory party, I do not see how Gladstone, Sidney Herbert, and the rest of Peel's followers can ever rejoin them. But much depends upon the League pursuing an honest course. We must not look to the right or left, but as of old go with a single purpose to our object. We must not allow ourselves to be used by the Whigs or Peelites, but hold the balance fairly between them."

1852.

ÆT. 48.

Parliament met on the 4th of November, but it was the 11th before the preliminary formalities were over. The Queen's

7 A great meeting of the League party in Manchester, in opposition to the Derby-Disraeli ministry.

1852. Ær. 48. Speech contained a paragraph of a very oblique kind on the question which was uppermost in everybody's mind. If Parliament was of opinion that recent legislation had contributed to the improved condition of the country, and yet had at the same time inflicted injury on important interests, then it was recommended by the Queen to consider how far it was practicable to mitigate the injury, and to enable the country to meet unrestricted competition. Writing to his wife on the day after the debate on the Address, Cobden says,—"We had a queer tricky allusion to the Free Trade question in the Queen's Speech, which brought on a sharp attack upon the Government last night, and as all parties are agreed to force the Disraelites, I hope we shall bring matters to an end soon. It is time we were done with the question."

The process, however, took a little time, and was attended with some difficulties. "I am sorry to say," Cobden wrote a few days later (November 18), "I think it is quite impossible under any circumstances that I can be released before the 10th December. If even the Government were upset, there would still be certain things to be done which would take till that time. This has been luckily a very fine day. I have not been near the line of procession.[8] But Sale and Henry Ashworth have both called since it was over, and they think people are disappointed. It is the last piece of paganism of the kind that will ever be performed in this country, for I hear everybody in private in the House (even Tories) condemn it. But nobody dares to speak out in public.

"You will see by the paper that on Thursday Dizzy is to move an amendment to Villiers's address. Altogether, what with this inconsistent declaration of Free Trade principles coming from their own party, and this escapade of Disraeli's

[8] The Duke of Wellington's funeral.

on moving the address for Wellington's funeral,* the Protectionist party is very much demoralized, and will I think be broken up in a week or two. They never can hold together, for a score or two of honest, stupid people will still hold out, and in fact will be in a more creditable plight than in going over with the herd." 1852. Ær. 48.

"*Nov.* 24. („)—We have a fresh complication in the House, owing to Palmerston having played us a trick in moving a new amendment. The Whigs are very indignant, and the Liberals are now confessing that *we* found him out some years ago, and they now call him a traitor and worse. It is impossible to say how matters will go."

The story of these final manœuvres need not detain us. It was indispensable to pin the Ministers to an explicit acceptance of the policy of Free Trade. The Ministers were willing to give the required pledge, but they sought to escape the humiliation of a formal confession that the legislation which they had resisted with an obstinacy and a rancour unsurpassed in political history, had been wise, just, and beneficial. These were the "three odious epithets," as Mr. Disraeli styled them, with which Mr. Villiers asked the House by their resolution to stamp the Act of 1846. To call the policy just was particularly unpalatable, because if it was just, then what wrong was left for compensation? Mr. Disraeli deprecated this revival of the cries of exhausted factions and obsolete politics. He proposed a resolution which while acknowledging the effect of recent legislation in cheapening

* Mr. Disraeli in his funeral oration on the Duke introduced bodily a passage from a panegyric delivered by M. Thiers many years before on Marshal Gouvion de Saint Cyr. It had already appeared in an article in the *Morning Chronicle* in 1848; but the writer, a brilliant man well known in society, came forward to say that it was Mr. Disraeli who had called his attention to the passage from Thiers. The "escapade" was singular and it was certainly unfortunate, but men of letters, who know the tricks that memory is capable of playing, will hardly think it incapable of fair explanation.

1852. provisions, and binding the Government unreservedly to
ÆT. 48. adhere to the policy of unrestricted competition, still contained no declaration that the opinions of the Protectionist party had been mistaken or had undergone any change. The whole question turned upon the way in which the national verdict was to be worded. Was this solemn final declaration to be drawn up, Mr. Bright asked, by one who had repudiated Free Trade as Mr. Disraeli had done, or by one who had consistently supported it as Mr. Villiers had done? The question was not an idle point of etiquette. A majority of the friends of the Government no further back than the recent elections had openly declared either for a reversal of Sir Robert Peel's policy, or for compensation—the word that never fails to come into our ears when a favoured order is stripped of some unjust and mischievous privilege. Under these circumstances, ought the House to tolerate any evasion?

This was a manly statement of the case. The interests of political morality demanded that the Protectionists should either be forced publicly to recant an error which they had upheld with so much stupidity and so much virulence, and in some cases with such unscrupulous hypocrisy and want of principle, or else that on this issue, and no other, they should be driven from power. But the complex play of party combinations seldom permits these plain and unsophisticated courses. It did not suit Lord Palmerston that the Government should be turned out too soon. His plans for the succession were not ripe. A hurried crisis might make Lord John Russell again Prime Minister, and unde him Lord Palmerston was resolved not to serve. A little more time was needed to clear this up, and accordingly with a view of saving the Ministry from a repulse which would for his purposes have been premature, Lord Palmerston suggested a third form of resolution which would con-

tent Liberals, and which Protectionists might swallow. It became evident that this would meet the wishes of important sections of the House, always ready to be captivated by anything that wears the air of moderation and compromise. Mr. Disraeli perceived that he was saved, and withdrew his own amendment in favour of Lord Palmerston's. Cobden now made his first direct attack on Lord Palmerston, and he made it in very straightforward terms. But in the long-run Mr. Villiers's motion was rejected by a majority of eighty, and then Lord Palmerston's was carried by a majority of four hundred and fifteen.

1852. Æt. 48.

The field was now clear for Mr. Disraeli's Budget. It had been awaited with eager expectation. The Government was without weight, but it was not unpopular. There was no general anxiety to see the Whigs back again. A miracle of financial talent might still save the Ministry, though it had neither political principles nor administrative experience. There was a vivid curiosity of a personal and dramatic kind. Men wondered how the skilful gladiator would acquit himself, who had never been in office until he was made leader of the House of Commons. In a few hours after Mr. Disraeli had stated his plans, it seemed as if they were a success. One thing at any rate was clear; Free Trade was safe. "The Budget," Cobden wrote to Mr. George Wilson, the day after Mr. Disraeli's speech (December 4), "has finally closed the controversy with Protection. Dizzy has in the most impudent way thrown over the 'local burdens,' as he did before a fixed duty.[1] The League may be dissolved when you like."

When the discussion on the ministerial proposals opened

[1] When the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that he was not going to recommend any change whatever in the system of raising the local taxes, a good deal of loud and derisive triumph was exhibited on the other side. "Oh," said Mr. Disraeli with composure, "there are greater subjects for us to consider than the triumph of obsolete opinions."

1852. a week later, it was at once seen that the first favourable
ÆT. 48. impression had been a mistake, and that they could not stand the heavy fire which was now opened upon them by all the ablest and most experienced men in the House. All Mr. Disraeli's energy, self-possession, and resource were no match in defending a plan that was hollow and vicious in itself, against the forces that were now combined to overthrow him. Among other shifts, he conceived the idea of detaching the Manchester party from the Whigs and the Peelites. He asked one of their leaders to call upon him. "Protection," he said to the illustrious Free Trader, "is done with. That quarrel is at an end. If you turn us out, you will only have the Whigs in. And what have the Whigs done for you? They will never do anything for you." As a matter of fact Lord Palmerston's manœuvre had made the Free Traders even less friendly to the Whigs than they had been before. But it was impossible that Economic Liberals could support a Budget so fantastic and unsound. It proposed to repeal the malt-tax to please the farmers, and then to reimburse the exchequer by an increase of the house-tax, which was of course chiefly payable in the towns. "We don't want the Whigs to give us office," said Mr. Disraeli's visitor. "We don't think of that. In any case, we cannot support the new house-tax. And there are other things in your Budget which we think wrong." So the interview came to an end. Cobden spoke against the Ministerial plan in the course of the debate, but apparently with rather less power than usual. Mr. Disraeli wound up a vehement defence of himself by an invective against political coalitions. He had himself, it is true, a few days before been a party to an attempt to coalesce with Lord Palmerston. But nothing could save him against the union of Whigs, Peelites, and Economic Liberals, and he was beaten by a majority of nineteen. The next day Lord Derby resigned (December 17), and the

Aberdeen Administration was formed. The long deferred fusion took place between the chief followers of Sir Robert Peel and their old adversaries. Philosophic Radicalism was represented in the cabinet by Sir William Molesworth. The economic Radicalism of Cobden and his friends was left out, as Mr. Disraeli had foretold. The time speedily came when Cobden was driven to say that he never repented so much of a vote in his life as of that which he had now just given. 1852. Æt. 43.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PANIC OF 1853.

Some have noticed it as an odd coincidence that the voting for the Second Empire took place three days after the funeral of the Duke of Wellington. We might picture to ourselves, said Cobden, the third Napoleon rising from the yet open tomb of the vanquisher of the first. That event of sinister omen for France naturally roused considerable disquiet in England. But what had been a natural disquiet was exaggerated by the press and a certain influential class of politicians into a fit of angry and violent alarm. The massacre of unarmed citizens on the boulevards with which Louis Napoleon had cowed Paris and sealed his usurpation, had filled England with a just and righteous horror. But from reprobation of this deed of bloodshed to an invasion panic, there ought to have been a long step. Statesmen at least, whether journalists or actors in politics, might have been expected to abstain from flogging the public mind into a state of furious apprehension. Especially is this true of statesmen who, like Lord Palmerston, had been the first in the Days of December to applaud the President for tearing up the Constitution and throwing the national representatives into prison. Lord Palmerston, however, who notwithstanding his astuteness and his high spirits had a strong dash of honest stupidity in his composition, had got it into his head that steam-ships had thrown a bridge across

the British Channel. It was now perfectly possible, he said, that all England might waken up some morning to find that 50,000 Frenchmen had landed on her shores in the course of the previous night. It was in vain that military and naval authorities demonstrated the physical impossibility of this electric suddenness of invasion. It was in vain that statesmen like Sir Robert Peel had asked the House to figure to itself the surprise with which Lord Palmerston himself, sitting in Downing Street with all the threads of European diplomacy concentrated like so many telegraphic wires in his cabinet, would hear that on that day fortnight 150,000 men were to be landed on the shores of Great Britain. Lord Palmerston held to his fixed idea. During Peel's Ministry he had so incessantly asked alarmist questions, that even Sir Robert himself began to think of a Militia Bill. Lord John Russell was no sooner in office than the same influence was brought to bear, and in due time led to the Militia Bill which incidentally brought his Ministry to an end. Lord Derby's first measure on taking his predecessor's place was to bring in another Militia Bill, and the energetic support which was given to it by Lord Palmerston was one of the chief secrets of its success.

The organization of the militia was followed on the erection of the French Empire by an increase in each branch of the two services. Every condition was present which according to Cobden's diagnosis favoured the growth of an invasion panic. The country was very prosperous. Under the influence of Free Trade and the gold discoveries, the exports had risen in five years from fifty to one hundred millions sterling per annum. The manufacturers were rolling in new opulence. The revenue was satisfactory. The country gentlemen found that they were not ruined after all, but on the contrary were getting better

1852. ÆT. 48. rents than ever. There was, moreover, a not unnatural reaction against the outburst of pacific and fraternal exaggerations to which the Great Exhibition had given rise. The death of the Duke of Wellington and the recapitulation in a thousand funeral orations of his splendid exploits, had turned men's minds to all the pomp and circumstance of war, to heroic campaigns, to glorious and crowning victories.

When the nation is in the humour to indulge itself in the luxury of a panic, the mood never declines for lack of nourishment. The oracles of the military and naval clubs hurried to the *Times* with agitating communications. Every half-pay officer in the country had his own peculiar alarm and his own favourite plan. The counters of the booksellers were strewn with pamphlets like snowflakes, containing a Few Observations on Invasion, Brief Suggestions for a Reserve Force, Short Notes on National Defence, Plain Proposals for a Maritime Militia, Thoughts on the Peril of Portsmouth. Every morning a fresh and more terrible paragraph sent a thrill round the breakfast-table. There was a French plot to secure a naval station in the West Indies. General Changarnier had divulged a secret plan for seizing the metropolis. The French troops were tired of Rome, and were jealous of their share in the sack of London. The great shipbuilders on the Clyde had received an order for steam frigates from the French Government. A French man-of-war had actually appeared at Dover. It was to no purpose that each paragraph was demolished the very day after its publication. The Frenchman had been driven to Dover by stress of weather; General Changarnier said that his alleged plan was absolutely without foundation; the shipbuilders solemnly declared that no order for steam frigates had come into the Clyde. All this made no difference, and the panic ran its course. As Cobden justly said, nothing could surpass the

childlike simplicity with which every absurd and improbable rumour was believed, unless it were the stolid scepticism with which all offers to demonstrate their falsehood was rejected.[1] 1852. ÆT. 48.

Cobden was proud to recall that he and his friends in face of this outcry took the part which had been taken by the great political leaders who addressed our forefathers half a century before, and who bore the most honoured names in the history of English Liberalism. Nothing pleased him better than to remind those who taunted him with his alliance with the Peace Society, that the Society of Friends co-operated with Mr. Fox in trying to prevent the war of 1793, and that Mr. Fox was not at all ashamed to write to Mr. Gurney, of Norwich, begging him to get up county meetings, and to send petitions whether from Quakers or others to the House of Commons. Cobden spent the autumn between the general election and the meeting of Parliament in turning over these things. His industrious meditations took shape in a pamphlet which he intended to do something to appease the perturbation of the popular spirit. Before he actually sat down to composition, he wrote an interesting letter to his friend, Mr. Thomasson, of Bolton:—

"*Midhurst, Sept.* 27.—The course pursued by Brougham and all the Whig party at the close of the war, in opposition to the large standing armaments proposed to be maintained by the Tories, was precisely that which the Peace party are now taking in opposition to both Whigs and Tories. The former have since that time been in power, and there is perfect truth in the sarcasm that the Whigs are Tories in office, and the Tories are Whigs when out of office. But the misfortune is that, after having been in power and committed

[1] See Cobden's account in his pamphlet, written in 1862, *The Three Panics. Political Writings*, ii. 235—270.

1852. ÆT. 48. to all the bad measures of a Whig Government, the Whigs are rendered quite useless as an Opposition; and we have now arrived at that point that whether on the right or left hand side of the Speaker's chair, the Liberal party headed by the Whigs are incapable of doing any good for the country. But before you and I (men of peace as we are) find fault with the Whig chiefs, let us ask ourselves candidly whether the country at large is in favour of any other policy than that which has been pursued by the aristocracy, Whig and Tory, for the last century and a half? The man who impersonated that policy more than any other was the Duke of Wellington; and I had the daily opportunity of witnessing at the Great Exhibition last year that all other objects of interest sank to insignificance even in that collection of a world's wonders when he made his entry in the Crystal Palace. The frenzy of admiration and enthusiasm which took possession of a hundred thousand people of all classes at the very announcement of his name, was one of the most impressive lessons I ever had of the real tendencies of the English character. . . . . The recent demonstration at the death of the Duke was in keeping with what I have described. Now what does all this imply but a war-spirit in the population? As for the claims of the old warrior to popularity as a statesman, they amount to this, that he resisted two reforms, Catholic Emancipation and the Reform Bill, until we were on the verge of rebellion, and yielded at last avowedly only to avoid civil war; and in a third case (repeal of the Corn Law) he gave in his acquiescence to Peel after his old policy had plunged one-half the kingdom into the horrors of plague, pestilence, and famine. No, depend upon it, the world never yet knew so warlike and aggressive a people as the British.

"I wish to see a map on Mercator's projection published, with a red spot to mark the places on sea and land where bloody battles have been fought by Englishmen. It would

be found that, unlike every other people, we have during 1852.
seven centuries been fighting with foreign enemies everywhere excepting on our own soil. Need another word be said to prove us the most aggressive race under the sun? The Duke's career is no exception to this rule. His victories in India were a page in those bloody annals for which God will assuredly exact a retribution from us or our children; and his triumphs on the Continent can never be truly said to have been achieved in defence of our own independence or liberty. His descent upon the Peninsula was made after Nelson had at the battle of Trafalgar destroyed Napoleon's power at sea. From that moment we were as safe from molestation in our island home, as if we had inhabited another planet. Yet from that time till the close of the war we spent four or five hundred millions sterling upon continental quarrels. 'Oh,' but say the flatterers of our national vaingloriousness, 'we saved the liberties of Europe.' Precious liberties truly! Look at them from Cadiz to Moscow! The moral of all this is that we have to pull against wind and tide in trying to put down the warlike spirit of our countrymen. It must be done by showing them that their energies have been perverted to a disastrous course, so far as *their* interests are concerned, by a ruling class which has reaped all the honours and emoluments, while the nation inherits the burdens and responsibilities. Our modern history must be re-written."

ÆT. 48.

The pamphlet in which he now engaged, "*1792 and 1853, in Three Letters*," was, in fact, a modest attempt on Cobden's own part to rewrite in his own way one very relevant episode of that modern history of which he speaks in his letter. He makes no pretence of an original historical inquiry into the sources of the war between England and France in 1793. What he does is to show, and he finds an easy task in showing from the speeches of leading members of the war

1853. Cabinet, as well as from the narratives of Tory historians
ÆT. 49. like Scott and Alison, that the alleged grounds of the war were not the real motives either of the English Government or the English people. The French had opened the navigation of the Scheldt; they had invaded Holland; the Convention had passed the famous decree of fraternity, declaring in the name of the French nation that it would grant assistance to all peoples who should wish to recover their liberty, and charging the executive power to give the necessary orders to its generals. These were the three nominal grounds of quarrel. The real ground behind them all was the violent hatred which a conservative nation like the English, inevitably felt towards the revolutionary policy of France. For the actual motives we must look to Burke's philippics, and not to Lord Grenville's despatches. But deep-rooted hatred can be no evidence that a war prompted by it is necessary or just; and as a matter of fact there are very few persons now alive who, having examined the records of English policy in 1793, do not condemn the war of that year as both impolitic and unnecessary. Cobden would be justified by most modern students of the period in his contempt for the plea that the French were the first to declare war. It was manifest from the middle of December, 1792, that the English Government intended to join the continental powers, and for the very plain reason, apart from the captivity and imminent death of the king, that France had shown herself more than their match. For a time it was believed that the Revolution had broken up the army and dispersed the resources of the country. It was expected that Prussia and Austria would find the restoration of the old system in France easy to accomplish. For so long the English Ministry looked with a certain complacency on events which promised finally to lower their natural rival, and to punish France for the aid and comfort that she had

bestowed on the rebellion of the American colonies against Great Britain. 1853. Æt. 49.

Of course if Cobden had professed to be writing a history of that momentous epoch, he would have had to take many circumstances into account which for his purpose at the moment might fairly be allowed to go for nothing. Chauvelin, for instance, was not so humble and innocent an emissary as Cobden's language might leave us to suppose; he was a coxcomb without either judgment or address. The success of the French arms, again, coming after a period of intense apprehension, nursed in the Convention an arrogant and overbearing spirit which would probably have made the maintenance of peace with even a less proud Government than that of Great Britain extremely difficult. What is clear is that it would have been well for England, and probably for Europe too, if the British Government had done their best to remain at peace with the new Republic. And what is equally clear is, as Cobden showed, that the British Government when the crisis came, so far from doing their best to remain at peace, hurried violently into war. The many elastic possibilities of history did not concern a writer whose pressing object was to demolish the opinion, which the feeling of the moment when Cobden wrote made so mischievous, that it was the restless and aggressive spirit of France which first provoked the great war that opened upon Europe in 1792. This task, as I have said, was tolerably easy, and nobody who has fully considered the circumstances of the Declaration of Pilnitz will deny that though there were political parties in France to whom the foreign war that was forced upon them was for domestic reasons not unwelcome, yet Cobden was strictly right in his thesis that the French Government had, in 1792, given no ground of offence to foreign nations. "It is impossible," Cobden breaks out, in the fulness and sincerity of his emotion, "to read the

1853. speeches of Fox at this time, without feeling one's heart
ÆT. 49. yearn with admiration and gratitude for the bold and resolute manner in which he opposed the war, never yielding and never repining under the most discouraging defeats; and, although deserted by many of his friends in the House, taunted with having only a score of followers left, and obliged to admit that he could not walk the streets without being insulted by hearing the charge made against him of carrying on an improper correspondence with the enemy in France, yet bearing it all with uncomplaining manliness and dignity. The annals of Parliament do not record a nobler struggle in a nobler cause."

No part of the pamphlet was more likely to be useful than that in which Cobden explained to his countrymen that the French nation, instead of being ashamed of the Revolution, and envious of the social advancement of England, as we in the fatuousness of national vanity used to persist in believing, do in fact cling to the work of 1789 with appreciation, thankfulness, and invincible tenacity; and that men of the most opposite opinions on every other subject, agree that to the Revolution in its normal phases France is indebted for a more rapid advance in civilization, wealth, and happiness, than was ever previously made by any community of a similar extent in the same period of time. No people, he went on, have ever clung with more unshaken staunchness to the essential principles and main objects of a Revolution than have the French. When you say that their new Emperor is absolute and his will omnipotent, remember that there are three things which even he dare not attempt to do. He dare not attempt to endow with land and tithes one sect as the exclusively paid religion of the State. He could not create a system of primogeniture and entail. And finally he could not impose a tax on succession to personal property, and leave real property free. In England we have all three.

"I am penning these pages," said Cobden, sitting in his little study at Dunford, "in a maritime county. Stretching from the sea, right across to the verge of the next county, and embracing great part of the parish in which I sit, are the estates of three proprietors, which extend in almost unbroken masses for upwards of twenty miles. The residence of one of them is surrounded with a walled park ten miles in circumference. Well, if Louis Napoleon were to create three such estates in France, it would be fatal to him. Tell the eight millions of landed proprietors in France that they shall exchange lots with the English people, where the labourer who cultivates the farm has no more proprietary interest in the soil than the horses he drives, and he will be stricken with horror." 1853. ÆT. 49.

All this was said, not to urge the land question, but to press upon his countrymen the habit of which of all others they stand most in need, of learning to tolerate the feelings and predilections of other nations. "Let us spare our pity," he insisted, "where people are contented; and withhold our contempt from a nation who hold what they prize by the vigilant exercise of public opinion." What the Frenchman cherishes is equality; what the Englishman cherishes is personal liberty. The poorest cottager on any of the three estates that encircle Heyshott "feels that his personal liberty is sacred, and he cares little for equality. And here I will repeat," says Cobden, "that I would rather live in a country where this feeling in favour of individual freedom is jealously cherished, than be without it in the enjoyment of all the principles of the French Constituent Assembly." It is passages like this that help us to understand the secret of Cobden's position, and of his attraction. He was so much of an Englishman, while he strove to show how Englishmen might become more generous, more noble, and more just in their judgments on other nations.

1853. ÆT. 49. His words about Louis Napoleon contained an admirable illustration of the same ever wholesome lesson:—"It is hardly necessary to declare that, were Louis Napoleon an Englishman, or I a Frenchman, however small a minority of opponents he might have, I should be one of them;—that is all I have to say in the matter; for anything more would in my opinion be mere impertinence towards the French people, who for reasons best known to themselves acquiesce in his rule." And as to the first and stronger Napoleon, the French feeling for his memory which had just been so strikingly manifested in the immense and spontaneous vote for the Empire of his nephew, became an intelligible sentiment in Cobden's pages, instead of remaining the wicked mania that it appeared to the majority of his countrymen. We, he said, who have just paid almost pagan honours to the remains of a general who fought the battles of the Coalition,—"what should we have done in honour of those soldiers who beat back from our frontiers confederate armies of literally every nation in Christian Europe, except Sweden, Denmark, and Switzerland? Should we not, if we were Frenchmen, be greater worshippers of the name of Napoleon, if possible, than we are of Wellington and Nelson, and with greater reason? Should we not forgive him his ambition, his selfishness, his despotic rule? Would not every fault be forgotten in the recollection that he humbled Prussia, who had without provocation assailed us in the throes of a domestic revolution, and that he dictated terms at Vienna to Austria, who had actually begun the dismemberment of our own territory? . . . . Should we not indulge a feeling of proud defiance in electing for the chief of the State the next heir to that great military hero, the child and champion of the Revolution, whose family had been especially proscribed by the coalesced powers before whom he finally fell. Yes, however wise men might moralize, and good men

mourn, these would under the circumstances, I am sure, be 1859.
the feelings and passions of Englishmen, aye, and probably Æt. 49.
in even a stronger degree than they are now cherished in France."

Cobden would certainly have been the last man in the world to deny that there was another and historically truer version of Napoleon's career than the version of the Napoleonic Legend; but his sound principle that masses of men never accept either maxims or idols without something generous, rational, and worthy of our respect in the motives which sanctioned their acceptance, drew him naturally to this interpretation of Napoleon's position in the memory of France. The interpretation, if it be not historically justifiable, is at least dramatically true. It represents what Frenchmen were thinking of; and civilization will have taken one of its most enormous strides, when the citizens of each nation do not shrink from the duty of doing justice to the better mind of every other.

The pamphlet winds up with Cobden's invariable moral, that instead of lavishing interest on foreign nations who neither seek nor need it, Englishmen will do better to turn their attention to the defects of their own social condition. "I have travelled much," he says, "and always with an eye to the state of the great majority, who everywhere constitute the toiling base of the social pyramid; and I confess I have arrived at the conclusion that there is no country where so much is required to be done before the mass of the people become what it is pretended they are, what they ought to be, and what I trust they will yet be, as in England." The justice, the real patriotism, the hope, of these closing pages are all indeed admirable; and the illustration from the history of the Irish famine of the possibility of equalling the soldier's bravery and devotion in other fields besides the field of battle, is one of the most striking passages

1853. in English prose, not only for the truth of its feeling, but for
ÆT. 49. the energy, simplicity, and noble pathos of its expression.[2]

The pamphlet was published in the course of the ministerial crisis, during the formation of the new Coalition Ministry. Shortly afterwards, and almost immediately before the opening of the session under these changed auspices, Cobden attended for the fourth time the Peace Conference, which was on this occasion held at Manchester. He still nursed the honourable belief that the spread of sound information and reasonable arguments would suffice to stem the tide of national delusion, and he once more raised the old cry to which Manchester had in old days so briskly responded, for an army of lecturers and a deluge of tracts to counteract "the poison that was being infused

[2] "A famine fell upon nearly one half of a great nation. The whole world hastened to contribute money and food. But a few courageous men left their homes in Middlesex and Surrey, and penetrated to the remotest glens and bogs of the west coast of the stricken island, to administer relief with their own hands. To say that they found themselves in the valley of the shadow of death would be but an imperfect image; they were in the charnel-house of a nation. Never since the fourteenth century did pestilence, the gaunt handmaid of famine, glean so rich a harvest. In the midst of a scene, which no field of battle ever equalled in danger, in the number of its slain or the sufferings of the surviving, these brave men moved as calm and undismayed as though they had been in their own homes. The population sank so fast that the living could not bury the dead; half-interred bodies protruded from the gaping graves; often the wife died in the midst of her starving children, whilst the husband lay a festering corpse by her side. Into the midst of these horrors did our heroes penetrate, dragging the dead from the living with their own hands, raising the head of famishing infancy, and pouring nourishment into parched lips, from which shot fever-flames more deadly than a volley of musketry. Here was courage. No music strung the nerves; no smoke obscured the imminent danger; no thunder of artillery deadened the senses. It was cool self-possession and resolute will; calculating risk and heroic resignation. And who were these brave men? To what gallant *corps* did they belong? Were they of the horse, foot, or artillery force? They were Quakers from Clapham and Kingston! If you would know what heroic actions they performed, you must inquire from those who witnessed them. You will not find them recorded in the volume of reports published by themselves—for Quakers write no bulletins of their victories."—Cobden's Collected Writings, i. 494-5.

into the minds of the people." He met a friend in the 1853.
streets, who said to him, "You have come here at a very Æt. 49.
inopportune time for your Peace meeting, for everybody is in a panic, and thinks that you are wrong." Cobden manfully replied, that this was the very reason why they were there, precisely because there never was a time yet when it was so necessary for the Peace party to redouble its efforts.

While he was at Manchester, Cobden found satisfaction in the reception which his pamphlet had at the hands both of his friends and of the public at large. If it did not work a great national conversion, at any rate it did not fall dead. Opinion decided against him for the hour, but that the question should have been regarded as an open one, was the first preliminary condition of the world coming round to his view.

"*Manchester, Jan.* 27, 1853. (*To Mrs. Cobden.*)—I am writing this in the Corn Exchange. This morning's meeting is only moderately attended, but I suppose we shall be better supported in the evening. Bright has been speaking very well. Brotherton is now speaking a very good sermon. By the way, Bright came up to me to-day when we met, and exclaimed, 'What a glorious pamphlet you have written!' Henry Richard, of the Peace Society, tells me that he sat up till two o'clock this morning reading it, and is delighted. Ireland, of the *Examiner* paper, tells me he sat up to read it, and gives also a good account of it. Bright says it must be printed for twopence, and got into every house in the kingdom. I see the *Standard* paper has commenced abusing it, and is contending that the war was begun by the French and not ourselves. But the Whigs will be obliged to stand up for Fox and their party, and show the contrary."

"*Manchester, Jan.* 31, 1853. („)—I can't tell

1853. what the *Times* means by reprinting all my pamphlet.
Æt. 49. Hitherto I don't see that their own comments have shaken it much, and I suppose therefore they are rather inclined to let it tell its own tale in a favourable way. But perhaps the abuse is all to come. However, it is an abundant recompense for the little night-work, and the occasional cold feet it cost me, to see it sent to all the corners of the earth upon the *Times'* broad sheet. They may abuse it as they will, but after letting it be fairly read, I have no right to complain. If, as Doctor Johnson says, the best compliment to an author is to quote him, I must surely be satisfied when the whole of my pamphlet is quoted. I don't know what the effect of the *Times* reprinting it will be upon Ridgway's sale, but it will perhaps not be unfavourable. I have a long letter from Parkes, in which he is complimentary upon the pamphlet. The Liberal press is so taken aback by this slap in their face in the very midst of their anti-French howl, that they hardly know what to say to it. There is so much that they are bound to accept and support, that they hardly know how to oppose, and yet they don't feel disposed to approve if they can help it."

The great event of the session was the first of those powerfully conceived and magnificently expounded financial schemes by which the new Chancellor of the Exchequer astonished and delighted the country. The little handful of Protectionists declared that it was a Budget for Manchester, and asked for how many years more Manchester was to dictate laws for the nation. The country gentlemen did not even yet realize that the centre of political power was slowly passing away, not for a moment only but for ever, from the hereditary and territorial, to the commercial and industrial interests. They were not wrong in perceiving that this was the track along which Mr. Gladstone was now following Sir Robert Peel. In criticizing this great Budget,

Cobden naturally pressed his constant point of the importance of reduced expenditure as the true key to financial readjustment; and he pointed out that extravagance in this direction would assuredly fall upon property rather than commerce, as successive remissions of indirect taxation were inevitable. But he was particularly pleased with the imposition of the legacy duty upon real property, and described Mr. Gladstone's Budget as bold and honest.[1] On another subject he found himself in direct opposition to the Government. Mr. Milner Gibson brought forward his resolutions upon the various duties that stood in the way of a cheap press. He was supported in this attempt against the taxes on knowledge by Mr. Disraeli and his friends, and in the end he defeated Mr. Gladstone on the advertisement duty. The battle was not won for three years to come; and after the victory was achieved, the cheap newspapers which it allowed to come into existence hardly fulfilled all at once the political hopes which Cobden and the Manchester school expected. But that fact made no difference in their conviction that good must ultimately come from the abundant diffusion of information, and the constant threshing and sifting of opinion by daily discussion.

One incident at this time was like a ray of hope to Cobden. A large number of bankers and traders in the City of London went on a deputation to the Emperor of the French, practically to repudiate the language of the panic-mongers, and to express their desire for the continuance of relations of cordiality and good-will between the two countries. Unfortunately a train was now being laid in Eastern Europe which, before many months, had put an end to the panic of a French invasion, but brought something more mischievous than the panic in its stead. Cobden at this instant no

[1] April 28.

1853. ÆT. 49. more foresaw the war which was as yet only a cloud as of a man's hand on the horizon, than it was foreseen by the responsible statesmen in office. He passed the summer peaceably in Sussex, where he was superintending the building of his new house at Dunford. His wife and family were at Bognor, and he passed his time between the two houses. Mrs. Cobden used to bring him in a carriage as far as the Duke of Richmond's Park, and then he trudged across Goodwood Downs and over the unenclosed country to Heyshott. His thoughts meanwhile incessantly revolved round the concerns of public policy. He compiled a lucid and forcible exposure of the origin of the Burmese War, in which besides laying bare its naked arrogance, injustice, and folly, he predicted the mischief that such exploits must inevitably one day inflict on Indian finance. An expedition to a Peace Conference at Edinburgh, and a visit to Oxford were the only two breaks in his solitude.

"*Bognor, Sept.* 19, 1853. (*To Mr. McLaren.*)—You are going to do a very good but courageous act in giving your countenance to the Peace Conference. Nowhere has the movement fewer partisans than in Scotland, and the reason is obvious—first because your heads are more combative than even the English, which is almost a phrenological miracle; and secondly, the system of our military rule in India has been widely profitable to the middle and upper classes in Scotland, who have had more than their numerical proportion of its patronage. Therefore the military party is very strong in your part of the kingdom. In this Peace Conference movement, we have not the same clear and definable principle on which to take our stand, that we had in our League agitation. There are in our ranks those who oppose all war, even in self-defence; those who do not go quite so far, and yet oppose war on religious grounds in all cases but in self-defence; and there are those who from politico-economical and

financial considerations are not only the advocates of peace, but also of a diminution of our costly peace establishments. Amongst the latter class I confess I rank myself. . . . We cannot disguise from ourselves that the military spirit pervades the higher and more influential classes of this country; and that the Court, aristocracy, and all that is aping the tone of the latter, believe that their interests, privileges, and even their very security are bound up in the maintenance of the 'Horse Guards.' Hence the very unfashionable character of our movement, and hence the difficulty of inducing influential persons to attend our meetings. . . . If we add to all this that the character of the English people is arrogant, dictatorial, and encroaching towards foreigners; that we are always disposed to believe that other nations are preparing to attack England; it must be apparent that in seeking to diminish our warlike establishments, we have to encounter as tough an opposition as we had in our attack on the corn monopoly, whilst we look in vain for that powerful nucleus of support which gave us hopes in the latter struggle of an eventual triumph. The tactics of the enemy have been hitherto cunning enough. The soul of the peace movement is the Quaker sentiment against all war. Without the stubborn zeal of the Friends, there would be no Peace Society and no Peace Conference. But the enemy takes good care to turn us all into Quakers, because the Non-Resistance principle puts us out of court as practical politicians of the present day. Our opponents insist on it that we wish to totally disarm, and leave ourselves at the mercy of Louis Napoleon and the French; nay, they say we actually invite them to come and invade us."

"*Nov.* 9. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—I can give you no information or suggestion about Reform. It seems as if the Turkish question this year, like the French Invasion of the last, will

1853. serve to divert the public mind from home questions. And
ÆT. 49. this, in my view, is one of the great evils of our system of foreign intervention. But I must say we cannot charge it upon the aristocracy, or the executive, as a bait thrown to the whale. The so-called Radicals of the old school are more to blame. And this brings me to remark that in calling for Reform of Parliament, the Radical party (so-called) have no policy to offer as the promised fruits of another Reform Bill. When the Whigs headed the former cry in 1830, they promised retrenchment, peace, non-intervention, and all kinds of practical benefits. They have, no doubt, proved themselves to have been to a large extent impostors, but now the Radicals (I speak of those who are anything better than Whigs, and yet not of the Manchester School) have contrived to identify themselves with an absurd policy, which actually precludes the possibility of any appreciable reduction of expenditure, and puts them out of court as complainants against the aristocracy for their former system of foreign intervention, and the debts and misgovernment which have grown out of it. In fact, those Radicals who abuse us for resisting the invasion humbug and the Eastern question humbug, do not seem to perceive how they have been whitewashing all the doings of our aristocracy from 1688 to the present time; and not only so, but like the red-republican writers and orators on the Continent, they have contrived to give quiet people of property the notion that extreme liberalism means more wars, increased armaments, and greater burdens of taxation. Add to this, that Mr. Baines and a large party of Dissenters, the very salt of liberalism, have managed to snatch away from us more than half of our old cry of 'National Education,' and you see what a mess we are in for want of a Radical policy to inspire the great supine public with some hopes of advantage from a further reform of parliament.

"*Nov.* 22. („)—Yesterday I got a few lines from Moles-

worth, asking me what I thought ought to be done in the new Reformm Bill. I have replied that the Ballot must be had, but that he cannot carry it in the Cabinet at present; that the suppression of the little boroughs is a *sine quâ non* of any approximation to any fair system of representation; but that whatever Lord John may consent to do, I trust *he* will never agree to the principle of finality on the Franchise question, by which more than five millions of adult males are to be stigmatized as unworthy of any share in the government of the country. Is this a time for such a retrograde policy, when America and the Colonies are beckoning away our population to a higher economical and political fate? It is true the masses in this country are badly led and poorly informed, and I fear possess less power to influence the Legislature than at any previous time; and probably they have not even the same interest as of old in the theory of a representative system. But if this all be true, so much the worse for us all, for the lot of the millions will be the fate of the country. Without the cordial sympathy and co-operation of the masses, our electoral system will become as soulless a thing as that which lately existed in France."

"*London, Dec.* 14, 1853. (*To F. W. Cobden.*)—I got back here yesterday from Oxford, where I spent a most agreeable time. Instead of a monastery, the University is rather a great nest of clubs, where everybody knows everybody, and all are anxious to have a stranger of any note to break the monotony of their lives. I might have lived at free quarters for weeks amongst them. The best of fare, plenty of old port and sherry, and huge fires, seem the chief characteristics of all the colleges. No bad recommendation you will say in December. As for the education, it is, according to Doctor Heldenmaier, 'the largest investment for the smallest return of all the academies of the world!' But after seeing some of the examinations I am

1858. inclined to think there is a greater effort required to face the
ÆT. 49. ordeal than we generally suppose."

By the end of the year an extraordinary change had at last taken place in the political sky, which Cobden described in his characteristic style years afterwards. "Let us suppose an invalid," he said,[4] "to have been ordered, for the benefit of his health, to make the voyage to Australia and back. He left England in the month of February or March. The militia was preparing for duty; the coasts and dockyards were being fortified; the navy, army, and artillery were all in course of augmentation; inspectors of artillery and cavalry were reported to be busy on the southern coast; deputations from railway companies, it was said, had been waiting on the Admiralty and Ordnance, to explain how rapidly the commissariat and military stores could be transported from the Tower to Dover or Portsmouth; and the latest paragraph of news from the Continent was that our neighbours on the other side of the Channel were practising the embarkation and disembarkation of troops by night. He left home amidst all these alarms and preparations for a French invasion. After an absence of four or five months, during which time he had no opportunity of hearing more recent news from Europe, he steps on shore at Liverpool, and the first newspaper he sees informs him that the English and French fleets are lying side by side in Besika Bay. An impending naval engagement between the two Powers is naturally the idea that first occurs to him; but glancing at the leading article of the journal, he learns that England and France have entered into an alliance, and that they are on the eve of commencing a sanguinary war against Russia."

[4] In *The Three Panics: An Historical Episode* (1862): Collected Writings, ii. 269.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CRIMEAN WAR.

At the end of May, 1853, Cobden had described to his brother that there was a good deal of uneasiness at headquarters about Turkish affairs. "The Cabinet," he said, "has been divided almost to a split upon the question of more or less direct interference on our part. The Peelites and Molesworth are the least disposed for intervention. The Whigs and Palmerston are for the old stereotyped phrases of Integrity of the Turkish Empire, Balance of Power, etc. They are words without meaning, the mere echoes of the past, and so are admirably suited for the mouths of senile Whiggery." By the end of the year, owing to a series of causes which are now well understood, the relations of Russia to the two Western Powers had been allowed to fall into an extremely dangerous position. Cobden's account of the state of the Government was unfortunately correct. The Cabinet was divided, and that came to pass which always happens in such circumstances. The section which had the strongest and most definite convictions won the day. This was the section practically headed by Lord Palmerston, and supported by the great influence of Lord John Russell. Instead of trying to know the facts of the condition of Turkey, these two Ministers rested upon the old phrases which Cobden so truly described. Nor had either of them, again, a well-conceived notion, as Sir Robert Peel had, of the function of diplo-

1854. macy in preventing strife. Diplomacy in their hands
ÆT. 50. always meant either veiled menace or tart lecturing, instead of being the great, the difficult, the beneficent art, which it has been in the hands of its worthiest masters, of so reconciling interests, soothing jealous susceptibilities, allaying apprehensions, organizing influences, inventing solutions, that the world may move with something like steadiness along the grooves of deep pacific policy, instead of tossing on a viewless sea of violence and passion. If this ideal had prevailed, nobody would have sanctioned the despatch of a British Minister to Constantinople who was the bitter personal enemy of the Czar. The Peelites, on the other hand, had strong general leanings towards non-intervention, but not sufficently definite to give them energy and determination in working out a policy that should avert war. Then the tide of popular passion rose with extraordinary rapidity. The tardiness of the diplomatists gave time for all that deep anger with which the people of England had watched the Czar's proceedings in Hungary five years before, to burst forth with a vehemence that soon became uncontrollable. The statesmen who ought to have exercised a counteracting control over it, were hurried off their feet. Lord John Russell and Lord Palmerston were rivals for popularity, and neither could endure to surrender the prize to the other by making a stand against the public frenzy. The consequence was that England became the cat's-paw of Austria, Prussia, and the Emperor of the French.[1]

War was declared in the spring of 1854. Before the summer of 1855 an extraordinary series of changes took place. The Coalition Government had fallen to pieces, Lord Palmerston had become Prime Minister, the Peelites had resigned, Lord John Russell had resigned and

[1] We must remember that even the modern Road-to-India argument for the defence of Turkey had not then been invented.

returned and resigned again. These confused and distracting retreats, one after another, of the statesmen who had so diligently fanned the flame of warlike passion, filled the country with a perplexed exasperation. It would indeed be difficult for the historian to find in our annals a more remarkable exhibition of political heedlessness, administrative incompetency, and personal incoherence than marked the fifteen months between the declaration of war, and the second retirement of Lord John Russell. Never was confidence in public men more profoundly and universally shaken. It was now that Cobden made a declaration of a kind seldom heard from politicians: "I look back," he said, "with regret on the vote which changed Lord Derby's Government; I regret the result of that motion, for it has cost the country a hundred millions of treasure, and between thirty and forty thousand good lives."

It is not difficult to believe that at the time of the Vienna Conference (1855) Lord Palmerston felt that the continuance of the war was required by domestic emergencies. Strong language was heard at public meetings about the aristocracy. The newspapers talked very freely about Prince Albert. The cry for inquiry was so passionate that Lord Palmerston was obliged to assent to the Sebastopol Committee two or three days after he had expressly refused his assent. If peace had been made at Vienna, the nation would have discovered the spurious pleas on which the war had been begun. Its temper was dangerous, and Lord Palmerston may well have seen the risks to much that he valued, if that temper were baulked.

When we look back upon the affairs of that time, we see that there were two policies open. Lord Palmerston's was one, the Manchester policy was the other. If we are to compare Lord Palmerston's statesmanship and insight in the Eastern Question with that of his two great adversaries, it is hard, in the light of all that has happened since, to resist

1854. ÆT. 50. the conclusion that Cobden and Mr. Bright were right, and Lord Palmerston was disastrously wrong. It is easy to plead extenuating circumstances for the egregious mistakes in Lord Palmerston's policy about the Eastern Question, the Suez Canal, and some other important subjects; but the plea can only be allowed after it has been frankly recognized that they really were mistakes, and that the abused Manchester School exposed and avoided them. Lord Palmerston, for instance, asked why the Czar could not be "satisfied, as we all are, with the progressively liberal system of Turkey."[2] Cobden, in his pamphlet twenty years before, insisted that this progressively liberal system of Turkey had no existence.[3] Which of these two propositions was true, may be left to the decision of those who lent to the Turk many millions of money on the strength of Lord Palmerston's ignorant and delusive assurances. It was mainly owing to Lord Palmerston, again, that the efforts of the war were concentrated at Sebastopol. Sixty thousand English and French troops, he said, with the co-operation of the fleets, would take Sebastopol in six weeks. Cobden gave reasons for thinking very differently, and urged that the destruction of Sebastopol, even when it was achieved, would neither inflict a crushing blow on Russia, nor prevent future attacks upon Turkey. Lord Palmerston's error may have been intelligible and venial; nevertheless, as a fact, he was in error and Cobden was not, and the error cost the nation one of the most unfortunate, mortifying, and absolutely useless campaigns in English history.[4] Cobden held that if we were to defend Turkey against Russia, the true policy was to use our navy, and not to send a land force to

[2] See Mr. Ashley's *Life*, ii., 280, 281. [3] See above, vol. i. ch. 4.

[4] The Sebastopol Inquiry Committee reported that the administration which ordered the expedition had no adequate information as to the forces in the Crimea; that they were ignorant of the strength of the fortresses to be attacked, and the resources of the territory to be invaded.

the Crimea. Would any serious politician now be found to deny it? We might prolong the list of propositions, general and particular, which Lord Palmerston maintained and Cobden traversed, from the beginning to the end of the Russian War. There is not one of these propositions in which later events have not shown that Cobden's knowledge was greater, his judgment cooler, his insight more penetrating and comprehensive. The bankruptcy of the Turkish Government, the further dismemberment of its empire by the Treaty of Berlin, the abrogation of the Black Sea Treaty, have already done something to convince people that the two chiefs of the Manchester School saw much further ahead in 1854 and 1855 than men who had passed all their lives in foreign chanceries and the purlieus of Downing Street.

It is startling to look back upon the bullying contempt which the man who was blind permitted himself to show to the men who could see. The truth is, that to Lord Palmerston it was still incomprehensible and intolerable that a couple of manufacturers from Lancashire should presume to teach him foreign policy. Still more offensive to him was their introduction of morality into the mysteries of the Foreign Office. Before the opening of the session of 1854, he presided at a banquet given at the Reform Club to Sir Charles Napier on his departure to take command of the fleet in the Baltic. In proposing success to the guest of the evening, he made a speech in that vein of forced jocularity with which elderly gentlemen give the toast of the bride and bridegroom at a wedding breakfast. When Parliament assembled, Mr. Bright remonstrated* against the levity of these jokes and stories on the lips of a responsible statesman at so grave and ominous a moment. The war, he said, might be justifiable or not, but it must in any case be an awful thing to any

* March 13, 1854.

1854 ÆT. 50. nation that engaged in it. Lord Palmerston began his reply by referring to Mr. Bright as "the honourable and reverend gentleman." Cobden rose to call him to order for this flippant and unbecoming phrase. Lord Palmerston said he would not quarrel about words. Then he went on to say that he thought it right to tell Mr. Bright that his opinion was a matter of entire indifference, and that he treated his censure with the most perfect indifference and contempt. On another occasion he showed the same unmannerliness to Cobden himself. Cobden had said that under certain circumstances he would fight or, if he could not fight, he would work for the wounded in the hospitals. "Well," said Lord Palmerston in reply, with the sarcasm of a schoolboy's debating society, "there are many people in this country who think that the party to which he belongs should go immediately into a hospital of a different kind, and which I shall not mention."[6] This refined irony was a very gentle specimen of the insult and contumely which was poured upon Cobden and Mr. Bright at this time. "The British nation," said Lord Palmerston, in a private letter, "is unanimous in this matter; I say unanimous, for I cannot reckon Cobden, Bright and Co. for anything."[7] Nobody who turns over a file of newspapers for this period, or the pages of *Hansard*, or the letters of Cobden and Mr. Bright to one another, will deny that Lord Palmerston's estimate was perfectly correct.

It is impossible not to regard the attitude of the two objects of this vast unpopularity as one of the most truly admirable spectacles in our political history. The moral

[6] June 4, 1855. Mr. Disraeli on one occasion during this period complained of the "patrician bullying of the Treasury bench," and amid great cheering told Lord Palmerston that he had used language which was not to be expected "from one who is not only the leader of the House of Commons—which is an accident of life—but who is also a gentleman."—July 16, 1855.

[7] Mr. Ashley's *Life*, ii., 325.

fortitude, like the political wisdom of these two strong men, begins to stand out with a splendour that already recalls the great historic types of statesmanship and patriotism. Even now our heartfelt admiration and gratitude goes out to them as it goes out to Burke for his lofty and manful protests against the war with America and the oppression of Ireland, and to Charles Fox for his bold and strenuous resistance to the war with the first French Republic. They had, as Lord Palmerston said, the whole world against them. It was not merely the august personages of the Court, nor the illustrious veterans in Government and diplomacy, nor the most experienced politicians in Parliament, nor the powerful journalists, nor the men versed in great affairs of business. It was no light thing to confront even that solid mass of hostile judgment. But besides all this, Cobden and Mr. Bright knew that the country at large, even their trusty middle and industrious classes, had turned their faces resolutely and angrily away from them. Their own great instrument, the public meeting, was no longer theirs to wield. The army of the Nonconformists, which has so seldom been found fighting on the wrong side, was seriously divided. The Radicals were misled by their recollection of Poland and Hungary into thinking that war against Russia must be war for freedom.

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Men who had come to politics in the spirit of philosophers or prophets, might have cared very little for this terrible unanimity of common opinion. But Cobden and Mr. Bright had never affected to be disinterested spectators of the drama of national affairs. They had formed strong and definite convictions, but they had formed them with reference to the actual condition of things, and not in the air. They were neither doctrinaires nor fanatics. They had always taken up the position of reasonable actors, and talked the language of practical politicians. A practical politician without followers is as

unfortunate as a general who has lost sight of his army. They had habitually appealed against aristocratic caste, against monopolist selfishness, against journalistic levity, against parliamentary insincerity, to the sovereign tribunal of Public Opinion. They had lived and worked on opinion, they had placed their whole heart in it, they had won their great victory by it. This divinity now proved as false an idol as the rest. Public opinion was bitterly and impatiently hostile and intractable. Mr. Bright was burnt in effigy. Cobden, at a meeting in his own constituency, after an energetic vindication of his opinions, saw resolutions carried against him. Every morning they were reviled in half the newspapers in the country as enemies of the commonwealth. They were openly told that they were traitors, and that it was a pity that they could not be punished as traitors.

A more mortifying position can hardly be imagined. Mortifying as it was, it never shook their steadfastness for a moment. War could never be for them a mere commonplace incident of policy. If the necessity for it was anything short of being irresistible, war was a crime and the parent of crimes. They now asked where was the necessity, and what was the justification. The danger of the Russian power, they said, was a phantom. The expediency of permanently upholding the Ottoman rule in Europe was an absurdity. The drawbacks of non-intervention were remote and vague, and could neither be weighed nor described in accurate terms. This is their own language. With such a view, it was impossible that they could do otherwise than hold sternly aloof. "You must excuse me," said Mr. Bright, in reply to the Mayor of Manchester, who had invited him to attend a meeting for the Patriotic Fund, "if I cannot go with you; I will have no part in this terrible crime. My hands shall be unstained with the blood that is being shed. The necessity of maintaining themselves in office may in-

fluence an Administration; delusion may mislead a people; 1854.
Vattel may afford you a law and a defence; but no respect I Æt. 50.
have for men who form a Government, no regard I have for going with the stream, and no fear of being deemed wanting in patriotism, shall influence me in favour of a policy which in my conscience I believe to be as criminal before God, as it is destructive of the true interests of my country."[8]

With equal firmness and equity, when disasters came and people were beginning to talk at meetings against the aristocracy and the Crown, Cobden would not consent to remove the blame of disaster from the nation itself. "So far as I am concerned," he said, "I will never truckle so low to the popular spirit of the moment as to join in any cry which shall divert the mass of the people from what I believe should be their first thought and consideration, namely, how far they themselves are responsible for the evils which may fall upon the land, and how far they should begin at home before they begin to find fault with others."[9]

It has often been asked how it happened that these two strenuous, eloquent, logical, well-informed men, with their great popular prestige and their consummate experience in framing arguments that should tell, failed so absolutely at this crisis in making any impression on the minds of their countrymen. The historian of the Crimean War, in a classic passage,[1] has said that the answer is very simple. They could make no stand because they had forfeited their hold upon the ear of the country by the immoderate and indiscriminate way in which they had put forward some of the more extravagant doctrines of the Peace Party. They had no weight as opponents of a particular war, because they

[8] Written in October, 1854. The whole of this admirable letter is given at the end of the first volume of Mr. Bright's *Speeches*.

[9] *Speeches*, ii., 54. June 5, 1855.

[1] Mr. Kinglake's *Invasion of the Crimea*, vol. ii., chapter vii., pp. 69—71.

1854. — ÆT. 50. were known to be against almost all war. In all this there is much that is true and excellently stated. We may certainly demur to the assertion that Cobden had as a matter of fact put forward the doctrines of the Peace party in immoderate terms. A careful examination of his speeches both in the House and in the country shows that he had always advocated the principles of non-intervention, not on grounds of sentiment, philanthropy, or religion, but strictly in the dialect of policy and business. The country, however, did not at the time perceive this. People are too much occupied, and they are moreover specially disinclined by national temperament, to examine an innovating doctrine with minute and literal precision. The virtues of Englishmen lie very close to their vices. The same dogged tenacity with which they encounter obstacles in the great material and political tasks which they have set themselves throughout their adventurous history all over the world, binds them closely to their prejudices. The same invincible stubbornness, as Haydon said, which beat the French at Waterloo, makes them prepare to receive cavalry at every innovation. They eye every reform as they would an enemy's cuirassier.[2] Above all, though full of religious sentiment, in every reference to morality in practical politics they instantly suspect cant. Cobden knew all this as well as anybody. But what he also knew was that the doctrine could only be made to take a hold on men by strenuous and persistent advocacy, even at the risk of this advocacy being misunderstood. Events showed in the long-run that his tactics were prudent. It was by the strenuousness and persistency of himself and Mr. Bright, that they at last succeeded in making that gross and broad impression which it was their object to produce. They were routed on the question of the Crimean War, but it was the rapid spread of

[2] Haydon's *Memoirs*, ii., 273, 274.

their principles which within the next twenty years made intervention impossible in the Franco-Austrian war, in the American War, in the Danish War, in the Franco-German War, and, above all, in the war between Russia and Turkey which broke out only the other day.

On the whole, however, it is perfectly clear that the failure of the two Manchester leaders to affect opinion at this time was due to the simplest of all possible causes. The public had worked itself into a mood in which the most solid reasoning, the most careful tenderness of prejudice, the most unanswerable expostulations were all alike unavailing. The incompetency of one part of the Ministry, and the recklessness of the other part, pushed us over the edge. When that has once happened, a peace party has no longer any chance. Cobden described this some years later in connexion with the civil war in America. "It is no use to argue," he said, "as to what is the origin of the war, and no use whatever to advise the disputants. From the moment the first shot is fired, or the first blow is struck in a dispute, then farewell to all reason and argument; you might as well reason with mad dogs as with men when they have begun to spill each other's blood in mortal combat. I was so convinced of the fact during the Crimean War; I was so convinced of the utter uselessness of raising one's voice in opposition to war when it has once begun, that I made up my mind that so long as I was in political life, should a war again break out between England and a great Power, I would never open my mouth upon the subject from the time the first gun was fired until the peace was made."[1]

During these two years of disaster and mistake, Cobden could not do more than raise protests from time to time as opportunity served. The House of Commons was much more tolerant than larger and less responsible assemblies. Describ-

[1] *Speeches*, ii., 314. Oct. 29, 1862.

1855. ing the reception of his speech against the Ministerial policy
ÆT. 51. at the opening of the Session of 1854, Cobden wrote to his wife:—"No enthusiasm, of course;—that I did not expect; but there was a feeling of interest throughout the House, which is not bumptious or warlike to the extent I expected, and not disposed to be insolent to the 'peace party.' In fact, I find many men in the Tory party agreeing with me. After I spoke, Molesworth took me aside and said he and Gladstone thought I never spoke better." The failure, again, of the negotiations at Vienna in the summer of 1855, and the consequent perseverance in the war, inspired him with one of his most forcible speeches, and subsequent events have made it more completely unanswerable now than it was even then. It is still worthy of being read by any one who cares to know how strong a case the Manchester School was able to make.[4] "The House was very full," Cobden wrote to Mrs. Cobden on the following day, "and sat and stood it out most attentively. Not one breath of disapprobation, and a fair share of support in the way of cheers. I was complimented by many members after it was over. Amongst others, Lytton Bulwer walked across the House to offer his congratulations. All this is not fit to be repeated at your breakfast-table as coming from me. Sidney Herbert remarked that it carried him back again to my old Corn Law speeches; and Lord Elcho (formerly Mr. Charteris) has just this moment come to whisper in my ear that he considers my speech better than Gladstone's. The roar of laughter against Molesworth at my 'black and curly' allusion disconcerted him sadly. I met Molesworth in the cloak-room on leaving the House. We exchanged a bantering word or two. 'How are you?' said he, with a grim effort at the facetious. 'How are *you?*' was my reply. After turning from me he fell plump into Bright's hands, who was waiting for me, and

[4] *Speeches*, ii., June 5, 1855.

who rallied him unmercifully, telling him he had not had half his deserts, and that he had something yet in store for him himself. Molesworth tried to be audacious, and told Bright, 'You are just as bad as I am.' Lord John will get sadly mauled before the end of it. The part I brought out respecting his signing away the rights of the Wallachians and Moldavians will be flung in his face again. Roebuck says he shall tell him that he ought to be ashamed to show his face in the House after affirming such a doctrine."

After reading this speech, so full of knowledge and comprehensive reasoning and of strong moderation as distinguished from the same quality when it is weak, we can understand that even in the midst of their anger against Cobden and Mr. Bright, people began to feel secret misgivings that they might be right after all. "There is a growing mistrust," Cobden wrote to Mrs. Cobden about this time, "of the durability of Palmerston's Ministry. I have heard from several quarters that if I and Bright had not been so 'wrong' on the war we should certainly have been forced into the Ministry. Two letters from Delane, the Editor of the *Times*, written to friends of his, but not intended for my eye, have been put into my hands, in which this sentiment is expressed that Bright and I must have been Ministers if we had not shelved ourselves by our peace principles."

Until the end of 1855 the prospects of peace seemed very remote. Lord John Russell described the state of things with characteristic concision in a letter to Cobden. "The peace of Amiens," he said (Nov. 12, 1855), "a very disadvantageous peace—gave universal joy. The peace of 1763, a very glorious peace—gave general dissatisfaction. The people of this country are not tired of war, and do not much feel the sacrifices you speak of. When they are tired, they will

1855. blame any Minister who does not make peace." The French
ÆT. 51. Emperor was in a similar predicament. Marshal Vaillant told him that he would not answer for the French army if it were brought home without laurels. In this unpromising situation Cobden sat down to write a pamphlet, which was published at the beginning of 1856, *What Next—and Next?*[5] Without going into the question of the origin of the war, Cobden made it his object "to give some facts about Russia with a view to prevent the self-confidence into which people fell of humbling that Power on her own soil." "I suppose people won't read it," he said, "but my conscience will be at rest."

It now remains to give some of Cobden's correspondence at this time, principally from that with Mr. Bright.

"*Midhurst, Sept.* 14, 1854. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—I am in the midst of the removal of my books, and for the last few days have been up to my chin in dusty tomes and piles of old pamphlets, a cartload of which I am consigning to the hay-loft for waste paper. Fortunately for me my mind has therefore been little occupied on public affairs, which I confess afford me but little food for pleasant reflection.

"I am as much satisfied as ever that we have followed a right course on the war question. It must be right for us, because we have followed our own conscientious convictions. But in proportion as we are devoted to our principles must be our regret to see so little prospect of their being adopted as the practical guide of our foreign policy. It is no use blinking the fact that there are not a score of men in the House, and but few out of the ranks of the Friends in the country, who are ready to take their stand upon the principle of non-intervention in the affairs of other countries. This is no reason why we should hold our peace; but it shows that we have to begin at the beginning, by converting to

[5] Collected Writings, vol. ii.

our views that public opinion which is at present all but unanimously against us. 1854. ÆT 50.

"I sometimes regret that I omitted to call meetings in Yorkshire before the war began. As it is, we must wait results, which will be serious one way or another soon, if the expedition to Sebastopol has been carried into effect. My own opinion is that if the Anglo-French army can make good a landing, it will be a match in the open field for three times its number of Russian troops. But there are all the accidents of wind and weather. How Lord Aberdeen must have quaked at the sound of the equinoctial gales which began blowing last night a week before they were due. The fate of the ministry quite as much as that of the generals hangs on the result. If, owing to the weather at sea, or the climate on shore, or the dogged resistance of the Russians behind their walls, the expedition should fail, there will be a cry for a change of government. The English Radicals and Tories will alike demand 'victims' to appease their wrath. If it succeed, no matter at what cost of life, the ministry will be saved."

"*Midhurst, Oct.* 1, 1854. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—You ask when *our* turn will come. When common sense and honesty are in the ascendant, a day for me not very likely to be realized, as I am fifty, and not of a long-lived family. You have a better chance, but don't be too sanguine. It is very singular but true that if we look back to the originators and propagators of this Russiaphobia, they have been almost without exception half-cracked people. I could give a list of them, including Urquhart, Atwood, &c. Unfortunately we live in an age when in this country at least mad people have still a very great power over other minds. . . .

"I sometimes feel quite puzzled when I ask myself what result in the present struggle for Sebastopol would be the

1854. most likely to promote the end you and I desire to see, a
ÆT. 50. distaste for war and a wish on all sides for peace? Putting humanity and patriotism aside for the sake of argument, perhaps the best thing that could happen would be a long and sanguinary contest without decisive result, until the German powers stepped in to compel the exhausted combatants to come to terms. For whether the one or the other side win, I foresee great evils to follow. Let John Bull have a great military triumph, and we shall all have to take off our hats as we pass the Horse Guards for the rest of our lives. On the other hand, let the Czar's swollen pride be gratified and inflamed with victory, it will foster that spirit of military insolence which pervades everything in Russia. But if neither could claim a decisive triumph, and both were thoroughly discouraged and disgusted with their sacrifices, they might all in future be equally disposed to be more peaceable.

"It is scarcely possible to foresee any other result than this, unless upon the assumption that the Russian Empire is a more thorough imposture than anybody has suspected. And yet if the accounts be true, there does not seem to be a great force to protect Sebastopol, and all their Black Sea ships and arsenals, notwithstanding that the Government have had more than two months' notice from Lord John Russell himself of our intention to strike a blow there. What an illustration it is of the weakness which accompanies the acquisition of territory by mere military conquests on a large scale. We know that Russia has more than 600,000 effective troops, and yet if report be true she cannot concentrate 50,000 for the defence of a vital point. Little Belgium could do more. . . . .

"But I cannot convince myself that we are to have an easy victory in the Crimea. I was reading last night the account of Bonaparte's Russian campaign. If the Russians

fight behind their entrenchments now as they did at Borodino (where 70,000 were put *hors-de-combat*), there will be wailing here before another month. I can't see anything in the tactics of the enemy in allowing our forces to land without molestation to warrant the confident tone of our cockney press. The Russians would have been fools to have brought their men under the fire of our ships' guns. By the way, Napoleon entered Moscow without opposition on the 14th Sept., 1812, and we landed in the Crimea on the 14th Sept., 1854. Some people may think this an evil omen. We shall soon be relieved from our suspense." 1854. ÆT. 50.

To Mr. Bright.—" . . . . I have no news beyond what the papers give, which seems bad enough. The next thing will be, I suppose, an assault with the bayonet, to satisfy the morbid impatience of the public at home and the soldiery on the spot, and heaven only can tell what the result may be.

"I suspect from what oozes out that the Government have unfavourable forebodings. This accounts for the fall on the Paris Bourse, where the effects of bad news are always felt first, owing to the stock-jobbers being more mixed up with the personnel of the Government than here. A man who was at the Lord Mayor's banquet told me the ministers were looking very dejected. That they ought to be unhappy is certain; and yet when we have helped to turn them out, as I should be very glad to do, we shall have done little to avert a repetition of the evils of war until the public sentiment can be reached, for if a people will be ruled by phrases such as 'balance of power,' 'integrity and independence,' &c., when uttered solemnly by men in power, you may depend on it they will always find 'statesmen' to take office on such easy terms. I do not know how it is to be done, but I am quite sure there is no security for anything better until we can teach the *people* a lesson of

1855. Æt. 51. moderation and modesty in foreign affairs, and enlighten that almost Spanish or Chinese ignorance about everything going on abroad which characterizes the masses of our countrymen.

"I am willing to incur any obloquy in telling the whole truth to the public as to the share they have had in this war, and it is better to face any neglect or hostility than allow them to persuade themselves that anybody but themselves are responsible for the war."

"*Midhurst, Jan.* 5, 1855. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—I agree with you that there is some change in the public mind upon the war; but the more moderate tone is less to be attributed to pacific tendencies than to the lassitude which naturally follows a great excitement. There is about as much unsoundness as ever abroad about foreign affairs. A few exceptions scattered over the land have come to my knowledge since I spoke in the House. I have heard from a few parsons, amongst others; they are, I suppose, eccentricities who have not much weight.

"The break-down of our aristocratic rulers, when their energies are put to the stress of a great emergency, is about the most consolatory incident of the war. I am not sure that it will so far raise the middle class in their own esteem as to induce them to venture on the task of self-government. They must be ruled by lords. Even the *Times* is obliged to make the amende to the aristocratic spirit of the age by calling for that very ordinary but self-willed lord, the Governor-general of India, to come and save us.* But the discredit and the slaughter to which our patricians, civil and military, have been exposed, will go far to make real war unpopular with that influential class for another generation to come, whilst the swift retribution likely to fall on the cabinet will tend to make Governments less warlike in future.

* Lord Dalhousie was now Governor-general.

As for the people, they have scarcely felt the effects of the war as yet, but they are rapidly developing themselves in diminished trade and increasing able-bodied pauperism, and augmented taxation will follow.

"The most dishonest or most 'incapable and guilty' feature in the conduct of the Government, to my judgment, has been their readiness to fall into the warlike humour of the public, and concealing from them the extent of the undertaking. Even Gladstone has lent himself to the delusion that the people can be indulged with a *cheap war*. It is impossible to believe that the Ministry were so ignorant as to suppose that we could fight Russia on her own territory, 3000 miles distant by sea, for 10,000,000*l*. But really I believe Palmerston or Lord John would have undertaken to do it by contract for as many shillings, rather than not have gained the sweet voice of the multitude twelve months since.

"I observe what you say about the want of more cooperation amongst our friends . . . . in the House. What we really want is sympathy and support for our views out of doors. We have a far better hearing in Parliament than in the country. I defy you, from one extremity of the kingdom to the other, to find a mixed body of men in which you and I should be so well treated as we were on the last day of the session. It is the want of identity between the great public and ourselves on important and engrossing questions of principle that leaves us in such an isolated position in the House. I am content to be as we are, with nothing but an approving conscience for the course we pursue. Not that I am, as Parkes says, without ambition. If I had been where Sumner and Amasa Walker are, I should have set no bounds to my ambition; but my judgment told me twenty years ago that if I aimed at office in this country, it must lead either to disappointment or an abandonment of objects which I cherish far before official

1854. rank, and therefore I preferred pioneering for my convictions to promotion at the expense of them."
ÆT. 50.

"*January* 10, 1855. (*To Colonel Fitzmayer.*)—I have again to thank you for your continued kindness in sending me the regular news of your siege operations. When I think of all the discomfort under which your letters are penned, I cannot too highly value such proofs of your friendship. . . .

"Before this reaches you, the news will have been carried to the Crimea that negotiations for peace have been opened on the basis of the four points. It remains to be seen whether the Czar is in earnest, and whether the allies enter in a *bonâ-fide* spirit upon the deliberations. I am inclined to believe that all the Governments are heartily sick of the war, and therefore shall not be surprised if a peace be speedily arranged. But in the meantime our newspapers must swagger a good deal over the Czar, and persuade their readers that we have subjected him to great humiliations. I confess, however, that I do not see the grounds for this boastful self-glorification. It is true that you have beaten the Russians in the field, but there is always the broad fact remaining that Sebastopol is not taken. It is no fault of your brave army that the place is still holding out—the fact is we never ought to have made the plunge in the dark in the Crimea at all. Indeed it has been admitted in the House by Lord John Russell that both government and generals had been mistaken in their estimate of its strength. This confession ought to suffice to condemn the present Administration to dismissal from office; for there can be no excuse for ignorance on a point which might have been very easily cleared up before the expedition sailed. I think I could have undertaken in June last to have obtained the most minute particulars as to the strength of Sebastopol for a few thousand pounds.

"There are some points raised in your letter which I shall

hope to be able to discuss with you at my fireside when you return again to England, for my wife and I trust you will honour us with a visit to this picturesque and secluded part of the country. But in the meantime I must be allowed to say in reference to your allusions to a regular standing army, that I am not opposed to the maintenance of a disciplined force to serve as a nucleus in case of war, around which the people might rally to defend their country. But there is hardly a case to be imagined or assumed in which I would consent to send out a body of land forces to fight the battles of the continent; and last of all would I agree to send such an expedition to the shores of Russia.

"There is now a general complaint that we allowed our army to fall to too low a standard, in consequence of the cry of the financial reformers for a reduction of the expenditure. I am bound to say that if this country adopts the policy of sending its armies to fight the Czar on his own territory, then it is bound to keep up a force commensurate with the magnitude of such an undertaking. We must become a military people like France and Austria. This will be contrary to our traditions, and quite incompatible with an economical government. I am not sure that constitutional freedom can co-exist with large standing armies. I know of no instance in which they have flourished together. However, we will adjourn the debate on this subject till we meet."

"*February* 11, 1855. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—You made an excellent speech at the Chamber of Commerce, which at the present moment will compel many men to listen to your warnings who have hitherto been deaf to everything but the appeals to 'glory and honour.'

"Did you see Cornewall Lewis's speech? It was a good sign coming from the *Edinburgh Review*.

"But I can think of nothing else but the Derby-Disraeli

1855. Æт. 51. *exposé!*[7] . . . . What can your friend Dizzy say or do in opposition to the Government, after having agreed not merely to serve under Palmerston, but to sit in the same Cabinet with Gladstone and Sidney Herbert! And what will our soft radicals say after the affectionate flirtation of Lord Derby with their great champion of democracy all over the world? Lord D. seems to me to have played a clever game for the future, and is, I suppose, acting under the inspiration of such men as Lord Lonsdale in casting himself loose from *all* his old team and opening the door for fresh alliances. Lord Palmerston can't of course last many years, or perhaps months, and then the 'great Conservative party' is the only one not used up. But what is to become of Disraeli? He can't be first whilst Gladstone is either with him or against him, and he won't play second to anybody but Palmerston. Will it end in his going ambassador to Paris? In the meantime he has to eat a good deal of dirt.

"As for the Government, unless they put on fresh masks and dresses, we shall certainly think them the same gentlemen who got us into a 'foolish, just, and necessary war,' as Sidney Smith would call it, and then threw away the finest army we ever had for want of staff and generals. As for the exchange of Panmure for Newcastle, we who have been behind the scenes know that the public gain nothing by that. Again and again I ask myself, in witnessing the childish glee with which the press and public call for Palmerston to serve them—are we not a used-up nation?

[7] "Lord Derby was sent for to form a government, and immediately sought the co-operation of Lord Palmerston, offering him the leadership of the House of Commons, which Mr. Disraeli was willing to waive in his favour. Offers were also made through him to Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Sidney Herbert." Ashley's Life of Lord Palmerston, ii. 304. "Derby," wrote Lord Palmerston to his brother, "felt conscious of the incapacity of the greater portion of his party, and their unfitness to govern the country."

Could any people not in its dotage look to such a quarter for a saviour? However, it is a consolation that we shall soon see the bursting of that bubble which the cockney claqueurs have been so industriously blowing for the last few years. . . . . . 1855. ÆT. 51.

"As respects the prospect of peace, I am of opinion that Palmerston will be anxious to steal from Aberdeen the credit of getting out of the war. Depend on it the court and aristocracy are more than ever anxious to put an end to hostilities. They have found for the first time that their prestige, privileges, and dearest interests are more endangered than those of any other class by a state of war. It will be a blessed advantage to us that henceforth our best allies in the advocacy of peace principles will be in high quarters. My only doubt is whether Louis Napoleon has some sinister motives for continuing the war. I don't like the tone of Drouyn de L'Huys's notes to Prussia. They are novel in style, especially for so cautious and clever a diplomatist, and I learn from Faucher they are making a great and mischievous impression upon the public mind in Prussia.

"For my part, I can't think of these things and to what an extent *we* as a people are wrong in our alliances and tendencies without most cynical misgivings respecting the future course of our foreign policy. There is positively no intelligence amongst the masses on such subjects to serve as a leverage in dealing with the abounding fallacies of the juveniles, who, fresh from college, 'do' this department of our periodical literature, and take either the line of our old aristocratic diplomacy in favour of the 'balance of power' and dynastic alliances, or the more modern and equally unsound and mischievous line newly adopted by our so-called 'democrats' on behalf of Mazzini and the 'nationalities.' There is no out-of-doors support for the party of peace and non-intervention."

1855. "*Midhurst, Sept.* 30. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—I think you will
ÆT. 51. read the enclosed with interest. There is a description of what the writer witnessed at the hospital in Sebastopol, which surpasses everything I have read. The graphic account of the horses lying harnessed to the guns at the bottom of the clear blue water comes back to my mind's eye like a real picture. You will see that he speaks of our failure at the Redan as arising solely from the fact of the men not following their officers to the assault. He is always on the side of the *men*, and he finds excuses for them at the expense of the officers. But the real solution of the disaster is that the troops were raw recruits—mere boys, and I expect that after a little more recrimination between the parties concerned the whole truth will come out, that, in the words of the *Times*' correspondent, 'we are trusting the honour, reputation, and glory of Great Britain to undisciplined lads from the plough or the lanes of our towns and villages.' It will end in an exposure of the hollowness of all those demonstrations of the press and the public in favour of this just and necessary war—for it will come out that the bone and muscle of the country take no part in it, but leave the recruiting-sergeant as best he can to kidnap mere children and carry them off to the shambles.

"This sham must blow up, but the press and Palmerston are so interested in not telling the people that they must do something more than pass resolutions, write inflammatory articles, or preach incendiary sermons—that they must in fact do the fighting as well as the shouting for war, that I expect they will let matters go on till we are plunged into some deep humiliation and disgrace. As it is, the French army are trying to soothe us with compliments so overdone that we cannot help seeing through the grimaces which accompany them. Depend on it, if the war goes on, men of sense will see that we must either have the conscription,

like our opponents and allies, to secure a fair representation 1855.
of the manhood of the country in the battle-field, or drop Ær. 51.
our bombastic posturing and come down to a level with the Sardinians, and be a mere contingent of the French army. The French will gradually but with every possible protestation of respect bring us to this. They are now acting almost independently of us, and from this time we shall see more and more the difficulty of our maintaining an equality.

"What is doing about the penny paper?[a] I hear from Sturge that he has doubts about ——. He speaks of —— and ——. I have the most perfect confidence in the good faith of these men, but if a precaution such as is contemplated be taken that the paper shall not go wrong, I should be inclined to say that it would be as well not to have a too enthusiastic peace man as its managing editor. The difficulty is to get a daily newspaper with a circulation of 30,000 established. If it be an expansion of the *Herald of Peace*, it will never be established as a *newspaper*—at least not this year. There must be a good deal of the wisdom of the serpent as well as the harmlessness of the dove to float such a paper, and unless it can be established as a newspaper, it will not attain the object we have in view. What say you to this?"

"*Aug.* 6. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—What an atrocious article there is in the *Athenæum* of last Saturday upon Tennyson's poems. War is in itself a blessing and the mother of blessings. We owe to it our great poets and men of genius.[b]

[a] This refers to the establishment of the *Morning Star*. Cobden had no financial interest in the venture, Mr. Sturge being a principal subscriber. It was understood that Cobden and Mr. Bright were to be consulted as to the policy of the new journal. As we shall see, this constant reference to them was so overdone that Cobden himself warned the editor against it—an instructive warning to leading politicians who meddle with newspapers.

[b] *Maud* was published at this time, full of beautiful poetry and barbarous politics, about "the long long canker of peace being over and done," and so

1855. Æt. 51. It is quite clear, according to the writer, that there must have been a mistake in the record of Christ's preaching. It was war, not peace, he left for a legacy to man. How could he possibly bring peace into the world to corrupt and degrade it? It is enthroning the devil in the place of the God of mercy, truth, love, and justice; for what has war to do with these?"

"*August* 8, 1855.— . . . . I paid a visit on Wednesday to my neighbour the Bishop of Oxford, and met Lord Aberdeen, Roundell Palmer, and some others. The old Earl was even more emphatic than at the same place a year ago in lamenting to me that he had suffered himself to be drawn into the Russian war. He declared that he ought to have resigned.[1] Speaking of the authors of his policy he said, 'It was not the Parliament or the public, but the Press that forced the Government into the war. The public mind was not at first in an uncontrollable state, but it was made so by the Press.' He might have added that —— had something to do with it. I really could not help pitying the old gentleman, for he was in an unenviable state of mind, and yet I doubt if there be a more reprehensible human act than to lead a nation into an unnecessary war, as Walpole, North, Pitt, and Aberdeen have done, against their own conviction and at the dictation of others. . . . ."

forth. The singular implication of the poet is that the best way to rescue the poor from being hovell'd and hustled together, each sex, like swine," is to cultivate "the blood-red blossom of war." Unluckily war cannot go on without taxes, and taxes in the long-run in a thousand ways aggravate the hovelling and hustling of the poor, as the state of the labourers after the war of Cobden's youth showed. That a man of Mr. Tennyson's genius should have been so led astray, only illustrates the raging folly of those two years.

[1] Sir James Graham in the same way said to Mr. Bright: "You were entirely right about that war; we were entirely wrong, and we never should have gone into it." Bright's *Speeches*, i. 192. "This war," wrote Sir George C. Lewis, who joined the Palmerston Government after Mr.

"*Sept.* 18. („)—I am actually so amazed and disgusted and excited at the frenzy to which all classes —and especially those called middle and respectable— have abandoned themselves, and am so horrified at the impudent impiety with which they make God a witness and partaker of their devilish paroxysm, that I would rather say nothing about it. My only hope is in Louis Napoleon—his interests and necessities. When I saw Lord Aberdeen a few weeks since, he said that his only hope of peace was founded on a favourable issue of the siege of Sebastopol; that if Louis Napoleon could meet with a 'success' to satisfy his army, he would seize the opportunity of making peace. Well, he has now the opportunity, and I have a strong impression (though founded on no facts) that he has sent pacific proposals to our Government, and that this embarrassing message is the cause of the frequent and long Cabinet Councils—for how can *our* Government make out a case to their deluded followers to justify a peace which must certainly involve the abandonment of the Crimea? The danger is that Louis Napoleon, whose one dominant idea is the alliance with England, may yield to Palmerston and the warlike spirit of our people, and go on with the war. But he has grave reasons against such a course at home. He will have to raise another army to pursue the war in the interior of Russia; bread is constantly rising in price; and there is an ugly symptom of rottenness in the financial state of France, as illustrated by the Dr. and Cr. of the Bank of France, and the rapid fall of some of the public securities. How does it

Gladstone's resignation, "has been distasteful to me from the beginning, and especially so from the time when it ceased to be defensive and the Russian territory was invaded. My dislike of it, and my conviction of its repugnance to the interests of England and Europe was only increased with its progress." Feb. 14, 1855.—*Letters*, p. 291.

1855. illustrate the madness of our combative countrymen when
ÆT. 51. one can only turn with hope for peace to the coercion of a Bonaparte upon the deliberations of our Cabinet! I don't see how we can act with Gladstone in the broad advocacy of non-intervention, so long as he professes to be an advocate of the policy of invading Russia. He seems to put an impassable gulf between us by that one argument, for if anything is ever to be done again in favour of peace principles, it must be by persuading the masses at least to repudiate the very principle of the Russian invasion. . . ."

"*Oct.* 5. (*To M. Chevalier.*)—If war had not absorbed my anxieties, I should have given all my sympathies to the great industrial rivalry to which you have invited the nations of the world. I should have thought of the *Champs Elysées* if my attention had not been unhappily so much *distrait* by the terrible scene which was exhibiting on the *Champ de Mars*. In fine, I deferred my visit to the Temple of Peace until after that of Janus should have been closed. But I fear that present appearances are against the realization of my plan; and it is more than ever uncertain when I shall see you. Under these circumstances I shall trouble you upon paper, instead of *vivâ voce*, with a little unreserved chat upon the subject of the war.

"You will remember that we had some confidential correspondence a few years ago, when the state of popular feeling here towards your Government was the very opposite to what it is now; and I have reason to know that that correspondence had a favourable influence upon the relations of the two countries, through the publication of those facts and statistics which you gave me; and I wish we could now in a similar manner contribute to the restoration of the peace of the world. When in 1852 I published in speech and pamphlet my views respecting the cry of a 'French

invasion,' I was denounced by nearly every London newspaper, and at present I am in pretty nearly the same predicament respecting my opinions upon the war. But is it not possible that two or three years may produce in my opponents the same change upon the one question that has undoubtedly been effected on the other? Depend on it there is a good deal of unreasoning passion and pecuniary selfishness on the part of the people and the Press of this country in the present warlike clamour.

"I know proprietors of newspapers (the ———— ———— for example) who have pocketed 3000*l.* or 4000*l.* a year through the war, as directly as if the money had been voted to them in the Parliamentary estimates. It is not likely, unless they are very disinterested specimens of human nature, that they will oppose a policy so profitable to themselves. But the *people*, who have no interest in being misled, will probably become satiated with monotonous appeals to their combative passions, and then the *papers* will change. The moment this reaction of feeling shows itself in considerable force, there are all the most able statesmen of this country ready to head the party of peace. For it is a remarkable fact, that whilst the mass of politicians appear to be so warlike, their leaders are all in their hearts opposed to a continuance of the war. I do not of course, include Lord Palmerston amongst the number of leaders, for it is a notorious fact that he never possessed the confidence of a dozen members of the House, and was therefore never at the head of a party. It is only because all the Parliamentary chiefs shrink from the responsibility of continuing the war that he has been enabled to seize the reins. All men of the age of seventy-two, with unsatisfied ambition, are desperadoes; and Lord Palmerston, in addition to this qualification, having had the experience of nearly half a century of Parliamentary life, having continued to persuade

1855. Æt. 51. the democracy that he was a revolutionist, whilst the aristocracy knew him to be *their* safe friend, he became the fittest incarnation of the delusion, bewilderment, and deception into which the public mind had been plunged; and he and his colleagues hold office to carry on a war for the continuance of which no other statesmen choose to be responsible. Had it not been for the war, the present ministry could never have been in power, and it will not last two months after the return of peace."

"*Dec.* 19. (*To H. Ashworth.*)—I have been gratified by the receipt of your letter. The newspaper also reached me. It is sad to see the bewilderment of the poor people about the price of bread, but we ought to be very tolerant with them, seeing how much ignorance we meet with amongst their 'betters.'

"The papers are underrating the effect of the drain of capital for the war on the *floating* capital of the country. People look at the assessment returns of real property, and they say, 'See how much more rich we are than we were in the last war.' But this fixed property is not available for war. It is only the floating capital which sets it in motion that is available. Now, I suspect that the proportion of floating to fixed capital employed in the manufactures of the country is less in relation to the number of workpeople employed than ever it was. Am I right in this? Has not the tendency been to increase the fixed as compared with the floating capital in a mill. If so, it is a very serious question how soon the withdrawal of the life-blood (the floating capital) may stop the whole body. With interest of capital at six to seven per cent. for trading purposes, how long will it be before some of the weaker among you go to the wall? If, as you say, the cotton trade as a whole has paid no profit, there must be a large proportion that are losing, and they will break if the war goes on. Then will follow distress among the operatives.

"You hear a good deal about agricultural prosperity. Turn to the dictionary, and 'agriculturist' means one who has skill to cultivate the land. The labourer is the agriculturist quite as much as the farmer, and he belongs to a body five to one more numerous. I assure you I never saw more distress among this class. They are generally employed. But their wages here never exceed 12*s.*, and are often only 10*s.*, and if you try to calculate how a man and his wife and three or four small children live upon this sum, with bread at 2½*d.* a lb., you will find your arithmetical talent very much taxed. Dry bread is all that they can get. The pigs have disappeared from their sties. They and their children are looking haggard and pale and ragged, and this is agricultural prosperity."

When the war was at last brought to an end at the Congress of Paris in the spring of 1856, two remarkable steps were taken by the assembled plenipotentiaries in Cobden's direction. They recognized the expediency and the possibility of submitting international differences to arbitration. Secondly they incorporated in the public law of Europe certain changes in the right of maritime capture which tended to make trade which was free in time of peace as free as possible in time of war also.

CHAPTER XXV.

DEATH OF HIS SON.

1856. At this moment Cobden was stricken by one of those cruel
Æt. 52. blows from which men and women often recover, but after which they are never again what they were before. He lost his only son, a boy of singular energy and promise. The boy, who was now fifteen years old, was at school at Weinheim, about fourteen miles from Heidelberg. He was suddenly seized by an attack of scarlet fever, and died in the course of three or four days (April 6, 1856), before his parents at home even knew that he was ill. There was nothing to soften the horror of the shock. Cobden was the first to hear of what had happened. His friend, Chevalier Bunsen, had recommended the school, a few miles away from Charlottenburg, his own residence. The schoolmaster sent Bunsen a telegraphic message, and took for granted that Bunsen would communicate with Cobden. Bunsen, on the other hand, took it for granted that the news would be sent by the schoolmaster. The result was that Cobden heard nothing until he heard all. In a letter to one of the most intimate of his friends, he told how the blow fell:—

"I had invited Colonel Fitzmayer from the Crimea to breakfast at nine on the Thursday. When I came down from my sleeping-room in Grosvenor Street, I found him and the breakfast waiting. My letters were lying on the table, and I apologized for opening them before beginning our meal,

and the third letter I opened informed me that my dear boy, 1856.
who by the latest accounts was described as the healthiest ÆT. 52.
and strongest in the school, was dead and in his grave. No one not placed in the same situation can form the faintest conception of my task in making the journey to this place [Dunford], which took me five hours, bearing a secret which I knew was worse than a sentence of death on my poor wife, for she would have gladly given her life, a dozen times, if it were possible to save his. I found her in the happiest spirits, having just before been reading to my brother and the family circle a long letter from the dear boy, written a few days previously, and when he was in the best possible state of health. I tried to *manage* my communication, but the dreadful journey had been too much for me, and I broke down instantly, and was obliged to confess all. She did not comprehend the loss, but was only stunned; and for twenty-four hours was actually lavishing attentions on me, and superintending her household as before."

I have been told how he entered his house at nightfall, and met his wife unexpectedly on the threshold; she uttered an exclamation as she caught his haggard and stricken face. His little children were making merry in the drawing-room. He could only creep to his room, where he sat with bent head and prostrate, unstrung limbs. When the first hours were over, and the unhappy mother realized the miserable thing that had befallen her, she sat for many days like a statue of marble, neither speaking nor seeming to hear; her eyes not even turning to notice her little girl whom they placed upon her knee, her hair blanching with the hours.

It would be a violation of sacred things to dwell upon the months that followed. Cobden felt as men of his open and simple nature are wont to feel, when one of the great cruelties of life comes home to their bosoms. He was be-

1856. wildered by the eternal perplexities of reconciling untimely
ÆT. 52. death with the common morality of things. "God!" he exclaims, repeating a commonplace of the grave, so old and well-worn, yet ever fresh in its pathos, "what a mystery of mysteries is this life—that one so young and bright, around whom our hopes and dreams had been twining themselves for fifteen years, should be in a few hours struck down and withered like a weed!" His was not a soul to lose itself in brooding over the black enigma. There is not a word of rebellion. He accepts the affliction as a decree of the inscrutable Power, and his quiet and humble patience touches us the more, because we discern the profound suffering beneath it. His anguish at the blighting of his own love and hope, was made keener by the strange torpor which now and for long afflicted his wife. His tenderness and devotion to her in the midst of all this agony, were unremitting and inexhaustible. Six weeks after the fatal news had come, he was able to write to his brother-in-law:—"I have not been out of her sight for an hour at a time (except at the funeral) since we learnt our bereavement; and I do not believe she would have been alive and in her senses now, if I had not been able to lessen her grief by sharing it." And this urgent demand upon his sympathies and attention continued beyond weeks, into months.

"My poor wife," he writes to a friend,[1] "makes but slow progress in the recovery of her health. She is on the lawn or in the field all day with a little spade in hand, digging up the weeds; it is the only muscular effort she can make, and it unfortunately leaves her mind free to brood over the one absorbing subject. The open air must in time give her strength, but as yet she has not been able to pass a night without the aid of opiates. Her friends must have pity and forget her for a time. She is not a heroine; but hers is a

[1] *To Joseph Parkes, May 23, 1856.*

terrible case, and might have taxed the energies of the strongest mind of her sex. I am sure that they who are impatient with her under such a severe trial, can never have realized in their minds the ordeal she has had to go through. She requires the patience and tender treatment of a child. It is true, as Bright says (who is one of the tenderest-hearted creatures I know), that *we* know but imperfectly what a mother suffers in such a case."

To the same friend, a fortnight later, he says:[1]—"I cannot prove as good as my word by coming to town this week, but my poor wife will accompany me on Monday. She is as helpless as one of her young children, and requires as much forbearance and kindness. God knows how much the comfort and regularity of her domestic life have always been made subservient, willingly and meekly so, to my political engagements, without one atom of ambition to profit by the privileges which to some natures offer a kind of compensation for family discomfort. And, bearing this in view, I have from the moment that this terrible blow fell on us, determined to make every other claim on my time and attention subordinate (even to the giving up of my seat) to the task of mitigating her sufferings. No other human being but myself can afford her the slightest relief. I sometimes doubt whether for the next six months I shall be able to leave her for twenty-four hours together."

He repeats with the helpless iteration of an incurable grief, how hard is the case of a mother, who had not seen her son waste gradually away as she tended his death-bed, but who suddenly and in a moment stumbled over his corpse as she passed cheerfully from room to room. She never to the last submitted to the blow with the graces of resignation, and hence she never had the comparative solace that might have come either from religion or from reason. To the end she

[1] *To Joseph Parkes*, June 4, 1856.

1856. fought against her fate. "But if there be one act of con-
ÆT. 52 tumacy," Cobden wrote in tender deprecation, "which God would pardon beyond all others in his creatures, it is surely that which springs from the excessive affection of a mother for her child."

The external trifles of life were in sombre accord with the tragedy that overshadowed their hearts. All things, small as well as great, in which Cobden was concerned, seemed to go wrong. His best cows lost their calves. The fruit in the orchard was all blighted. A fine crop of hay lay spoiling in the rain. Deeper than these vexations was his anxious concern for Mr. Bright. For eighteen years almost without an interval Mr. Bright had been at work in public causes. The labour of prepartion and advocacy would in itself have been enormous, but the strain was peculiarly intensified by the fact that the labour was pursued in face of misrepresentation and obloquy such as few English statesmen have ever had to endure. At a time when repose would under any circumstances have become necessary, instead of repose came the violent excitement of the Russian War. Mr. Bright's health gave way, and many of his friends began to fear that he was permanently disabled. "I think of him," Cobden wrote, "with more serious apprehension than he is aware of." And his correspondence with their common friends shows the reality of his solicitude. This is an extract from one of his letters of that time:—"I have always had a sort of selfish share in Bright's career, for I have felt as though, when passing the zenith of life, I was handing over every principle and cause I had most at heart to the advocacy of one, not only younger and more energetic, but with gifts of natural eloquence to which I never pretended. . . . . Perhaps there never were two men who lived in such transparent intimacy of mind as Bright and myself. Next to the loss of my boy, I have had no sorrow so constant and great as from his illness.

The two together make me feel quite unnerved, and I seem to be always feeling about in my mind for an excuse for quitting the public scene. Bright's loss, if permanent, is a public calamity. If you could take the opinion of the whole House, he would be pronounced, by a large majority, to combine more earnestness, courage, honesty, and eloquence, than any other man. But we will not speak of him as of the past. God grant that he may recover!"[1] 1856. ÆT. 52.

Mr. Bright and his family were staying in the autumn of this year at Llandudno. It happened that a friend, about the same time, offered the use of her house in the neighbourhood of Bangor to Cobden. Mrs. Cobden seemed to be falling into a settled torpor, which alarmed her husband. Dreading the winter gloom and the association of home, he resolved to try a great change, and accepting his friend's offer, he went with his family to Wales. Here the clouds slowly began to show a rift. Mr. Bright and he paid one another visits, with the bargain exacted by Cobden that not a word should be exchanged about politics. He was slightly reassured as to his friend's condition. At home there were signs of better things. Everybody about them was kind and neighbourly. Friendly offices were pressed on the suffering mother by good women, "such indeed," says Cobden, "as are found in the middle and upper ranks in every corner of Britain." Mrs. Cobden roused herself to talk her own Welsh among the poor people who knew no other language, and who brightened up and became confidential the moment that they were addressed in their own tongue. Her little children gradually became a diversion and resource. But her husband could not permit himself to do more than hope that she was perhaps recovering. His own mind began to recover its tone, and his interest in public affairs to revive. Lord Brougham among others was very anxious to impress

[1] *To Joseph Parkes*, Nov. 11, 1856.

1856. upon him the doctrine that it is Work only, and not Time,
ÆT. 52. that can relieve the mind from the pressure of bereavement. "If I had only my own case to consult," Cobden said, "I would at once return to the duties of life, and try to escape from the thoughts of the past in the hard labour and turmoil of politics."

Of the prospects of domestic legislation, he writes:—"I suppose the work to be attempted next session is law reform; and nothing is more pressing. Thorough measures, such as simplifying the sale of land up to something like the Irish Encumbered Estates standard, shall have my hearty support as industriously in the way of votes as if I were in the government. But I tell you candidly, I think this work would be better done if the Tories were in. The Lords rule this land in ordinary times supremely. It is only once in ten or twenty years that with a great effort the country thrusts them off from some bone of contention, but merely to leave them in possession of the rest of the carcase as securely as ever. Now the Lords look on the Tories as their party. They know that to enable them to keep office something must be done, and as they cannot satisfy the Radicals in organic questions, they strain a point to let their men have the credit of some thorough practical reforms of the law and administration. Hence the good round measure of Chancery Reform which the Peers passed for the Derby-Disraeli government. And depend on it, if we were now on the left-hand side of the Speaker's chair again, there would be a better measure of law reform passed than we are likely to see next session."[4]

Nowhere can prospects be calculated with so little certainty as in parliamentary politics. The session for which Cobden thus anticipated such tranquil occupation, proved to be one of the most striking landmarks in his history.

[4] *To J. Parkes*, Dec. 11, 1856.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CHINESE AFFAIRS—COBDEN'S MOTION—THE DISSOLUTION.

THE first week of the new year (1857) found Cobden back again at Dunford; but at the end of January he went with his wife to a hydropathic establishment at Richmond. "I have little sympathy myself," he said, "with the hydropathic superstition; but the simple diet and regular hours are always in favour of health." As it happened he had, besides simple diet and quiet hours, something which to natures such as his is the most favourable of all conditions to sound health, I mean the excitement of vigorous interest in a great public cause.

Certain transactions in China had for some time attracted his vigilant attention, and they now occupied him to the exclusion of everything else. In his pamphlet on the Second Burmese War Cobden had shown the danger and injustice of our accepted policy towards the weak nations of the East. A war had now broken out in China which illustrated the same principles in a still more striking way. Sir John Bowring, the Governor of Hong Kong, was an old friend of Cobden's, a member of the Peace Society, and one of the earliest agitators against the Corn Law. But he was a man without practical judgment, and he became responsible for one of the worst of the Chinese wars. The Chinese boarded the "Arrow," and rescued twelve of their countrymen from it on a charge of piracy. The British Consul

1857. Æt. 53. protested on the ground that malfeasants on board a British ship should not be seized, but should be demanded from the Consul. Nine men were returned at once. Bowring sent word that unless the whole of the men were returned within eight-and-forty hours, with apologies for the past and pledges for the future, the English men-of-war would begin operations. On a certain day the whole of the men were returned, with a protest from the Chinese governor that the ship was not a British ship, and that therefore he was not bound to demand his malfeasants from the Consul. The Chinese governor was perfectly in the right, Bowring's contention was an absolute error from beginning to end.[1] The "Arrow" was not a British ship. Its licence had expired. Even if this had not been so, the Hong Kong agents had no power to give a licence to a Chinese ship-owner protecting him against his own government. The case stood thus then. Bowring had made a claim which was legally untenable. The Chinese governor, while declaring it illegal, acquiesced in the demand. Yet the day after the whole of the men had been given up, naval and military operations were begun, a great number of Chinese junks were destroyed, the suburbs of Canton were burnt and battered down, the town was shelled, and this iniquitous devastation was the beginning of a long and costly war.

The course which the Government at home ought to have taken was this. Bowring ought to have been recalled; in time it is to be hoped that public opinion will insist that agents who are guilty of action of this kind shall not only

[1] Mr. Ashley's account of this transaction (*Life of Palmerston*, ii. 344), is too condensed to be quite accurate. If a man of Mr. Ashley's industry and character is not careful to see the facts of such cases precisely and as they were, we cannot wonder at the rough and ready style in which the public is wont to take the unsifted official stories for granted, whenever a British agent launches his country into one of these scandalous wars.

be recalled, but shall be formally disgraced and explicitly punished. His recall would have been justified even by the opinion of that day or of this. It was not, however, to be expected from the statesman whose politics never got beyond *Civis Romanus*, especially when he was dealing with a very weak Power. The Government resolved to support Bowring. As usual, they shifted the ground from the particular to the general; if the Chinese were right about the "Arrow," they were wrong about something else; if legality did not exactly justify violence, it was at any rate required by policy; orientals mistake justice for fear; and so on through the string of well-worn sophisms, which are always pursued in connexion with such affairs.

1857. Æt. 53

To Cobden, as we may suppose, the whole transaction seemed worthy of condemnation on every ground. Bowring's demand was illegal, and ought not to have been made. If this was doubtful, at any rate Bowring's violent action was precipitate. It was a resort in the first instance to measures which would hardly have been justifiable in the last instance. If there were general grievances against the Chinese, why not make joint representations with France and the United States, instead of stumbling into a quarrel in which we had not a leg to stand upon, and beginning a war for which in the opinion of our best lawyers there was no proper ground.[2]

The chance of reversing the course of policy depended as usual on the accidents of party combination. In a letter to Mr. Lindsay written in the last month of 1856, Cobden

[2] Lord Elgin, who was sent out to carry on the war, says in his diary: "I have hardly alluded in my ultimatum to that wretched question of the "Arrow," which is a scandal to us, and is so considered, I have reason to know, by all except the few who are personally compromised." *Letters and Journals*, p. 209. "It is impossible to read the blue-books," he says elsewhere, "without feeling that we have often acted towards the Chinese in a manner which it is very difficult to justify" (p. 185). See also p. 191, 218, &c., &c.

1857. describes the state of parties at that time. "It is unlike,"
ÆT. 53. he said, "everything I have witnessed for the last fifteen years. There seems to be no party having an intelligible principle or policy in which any considerable body out of doors takes an interest. The two sides of the House no longer represent opposing parties—unless, indeed, it may be said that our leader is at heart an aristocratic Tory, while the chief of the Opposition is, if anything, a democratic Radical. Of this a considerable number on the Tory side seem to be shrewdly aware, for they evince no desire to turn out Palmerston, in whom they have more confidence than in Disraeli." Under these circumstances, however, the position of a Minister must always be precarious, for the absence of definitely antagonistic policies places him at the mercy of fortuitous personal coalitions. One of these coalitions came into existence now. The Peelites were only following the tradition of their master in condemning a precipitate and useless war. Mr. Disraeli and his friends played the official part of an Opposition in censuring an Administration. Lord John Russell obeyed an honest instinct for justice. All these sections resolved to support Cobden. It was on the 26th of February that Cobden brought forward a motion to the effect that without expressing an opinion on the causes of complaint arising from non-fulfilment of the treaty of 1842, the House thought the late violent measures at Canton not justified by the papers, and that a Select Committee should inquire into the commercial relations with China. This enabled him to cover the whole ground of our policy in that country. He did so in one of the most masterly of his speeches; it was closely argued, full of matter, without an accent of passion, unanswerable on the special case, and thoroughly broad and statesmanlike in general views.[1]

[1] *Speeches*, ii. 121—156

The House was profoundly impressed. After a long debate, in which Lord Palmerston taunted Cobden with his un-English spirit, and wondered how he could have thought of attacking an old friend like Bowring, the division was taken. There was a majority of sixteen against the Government. The sixteen would have been sixty, it was said, if Lord Derby's party had held together. That so many of them were found on Cobden's side, showed that so far as opinion and conviction went, the minority was very small indeed. But, as we are always seeing, it is the tendency of party government to throw opinion and conviction too often into a secondary place. Mr. Gladstone said that if the division had been taken immediately after the speeches of Cobden and Lord John Russell, the motion would have been carried by a majority so overwhelming that the Minister could not have ventured to appeal to the country against it. The interval allowed the old party considerations to resume their usual force. As it was, Lord Palmerston with his usual acuteness and courage of judgment determined to dissolve Parliament. Mr. Bright was now at Rome. "I need not tell you," he wrote to Cobden, "how greatly pleased I was with the news, and especially that the blow was given by your hand." The blow was unhappily to be returned with interest.

The country had not long been engaged in the heat and turmoil of the general election, before Cobden detected ominous signs. He had long before resolved to abandon his seat for the West Riding. It was too plain that he had no chance. His views on education alienated one section, and his views on the Russian War had alienated all sections. It was thought that Huddersfield was the borough where the feeling of which Mr. Baines was the chief exponent, and which Cobden had offended, was least formidable. So to Huddersfield he went. But he was not more active for him-

1857. ÆT. 53. self, than he was on behalf of his absent comrade. It is easy to explain the feeling that was abroad. Under our system there is little tolerance for individual dissent, and new principles make their way against artificial difficulties of desperate force. People said that Cobden and his friends had shown themselves perversely independent of the Minister. They had been a thorn in the side of three Liberal Governments. They had been openly mutinous under Lord John Russell; they had opposed Lord Aberdeen; they had violently quarrelled with Lord Palmerston. They had committed the unpardonable offence of leading their enemies to turn out their friends. All this was narrow, undiscriminating, and ungenerous. In time men became ashamed of such criticism, but for the hour it was fatal. Cobden moved the vast audience of the Free Trade Hall to its depths by an eloquent and touching vindication of Mr. Bright, with whom, as he told them, he had lived in the most transparent intimacy of mind that two human beings ever enjoyed together. When he spoke of Mr. Bright's health—"impaired in that organ which excites feelings of awe and of the utmost commiseration for him on the part of all right-minded men"—his emotion almost overpowered him, and shook the soul of his hearers.[4] But the practical conclusion was foregone. He wrote hasty notes to inform Mrs. Cobden of his fears.

"*Manchester, March* 17.—I hear very discouraging accounts of Bright and Gibson. There have been many defections, and unless our friends are giving themselves needless alarm, I fear the chances are greatly against us. The cause chiefly assigned is less an alteration of opinion than a feeling of resistance towards the ghost of the League, which still persists in haunting Newall's Buildings, and, as is alleged, dictates to Manchester. I was

[4] See *Speeches*, ii. 74.

always of opinion that it would have been much better to have abolished the whole concern and taken up new quarters, and a new name. But it is too late to say anything about it now, and, indeed, the less said the better. I have determined to go to Huddersfield. I attend a great meeting this evening in the Free Trade Hall, and to-morrow shall proceed to Huddersfield." 1857. Ær. 53.

"*Huddersfield, March* 24.—I am dragged about all the day through mud and mire canvassing, and hardly know whether I can win. I don't think they are by any means safe at Manchester. I go over there again to-morrow, to attend a meeting in the Free Trade Hall."

"*March* 25.—We have just had the nomination. I was dragged to the hustings and obliged to speak, very much against my inclination. We had the show of hands. The polling is to-morrow. Our friends are in better spirits every hour, but I am still very doubtful. *If I win,* I will telegraph to London, and request a letter to be sent by to-morrow's post to you. So if you do not hear at the same time as you get this, conclude that I have lost."[6]

No telegram was sent, for Cobden was beaten. A Tory had carried the borough not long before, and now the combination of Tories with Palmerstonian Whigs was doubly irresistible. Cobden only polled 590 votes, against 823 for his opponent. At Manchester Mr. Gibson and Mr. Bright were defeated, and the latter of them was at the bottom of the poll.[6] Fox was thrown out at Oldham and Miall at Rochdale. Lord Palmerston's victory was complete, and the Manchester School was routed. Nothing had been seen like it since the disappearance of the Peace Whigs in 1812, when Brougham, Romilly, Tierney, Lamb, and Horner all lost their seats.

Mr. Bright wrote to Cobden from Rome during the elections. He had, he said sarcastically, just been reading

[6] Sir J. Potter, 8368; Turner, 7854; Gibson, 5588; Bright, 5458.

1857. Bulwer's *Rienzi*, and so he was prepared for ignorance,
Æt. 53. scurrility, selfishness, ingratitude, and all the other unpleasant qualities that every honest politician must meet with. When the news of the great reverse reached him, he took it with a certain composure. He put the case to Cobden, exactly as to a historical observer five-and-twenty years later it would seem that it ought to have been put.

"*Venice, April* 16.

"MY DEAR COBDEN,

"I have been intending to write to you from day to day since I received your letter. It was most refreshing to me to read it, although its topics were not of the most pleasing, but it came at the right time, and it said the right thing, and was just such as I needed. . . . .

"In the sudden break-up of the 'School' of which we have been the chief professors, we may learn how far we have been, and are ahead, of the public opinion of our time. We purpose not to make a trade of politics, and not to use as may best suit us the ignorance and the prejudices of our countrymen for our own advantage, but rather to try to square the policy of the country with the maxims of common sense and of a plain morality. The country is not yet ripe for this, but it is far nearer being so than at any former period, and I shall not despair of a revolution in opinion which shall within a few years greatly change the aspect of affairs with reference to our Foreign policy. During the comparatively short period since we entered public life, see what has been done. Through our labours mainly the whole creed of millions of people, and of the statesmen of our day, has been totally changed on all the questions which affect commerce, and customs duties, and taxation. They now agree to repudiate as folly, what, twenty years ago, they accepted as wisdom. Look again at our Colonial policy. Through the

labours of Molesworth, Roebuck, and Hume, more recently supported by us, and by Gladstone, every article in the creed which directed our Colonial policy, has been abandoned, and now men actually abhor the notion of undertaking the government of the Colonies; on the contrary, they give to every Colony that asks for it, a Constitution as democratic as that which exists in the United States. 1857. ÆT. 58.

"Turn to the question of Parliamentary Reform. 'Finality' is stoutly repudiated, not by Lord John Russell alone, but by the Tories. I observe that at the recent elections, Tories have repeatedly admitted that there must be Parliamentary Reform, and that they will not oppose a moderate dose of it; and I suppose something before long will be done, not so real as we wish, but something that will make things move a little.

"But if on Commercial legislation, on Colonial policy, on questions of Suffrage, and I might have added on questions of Church, for a revolution in opinion is apparent there also, we see this remarkable change, why should we despair of bringing about an equally great change in the sentiments of the people with regard to foreign affairs? Palmerston and his press are at the bottom of the excitement that has lately prevailed; he will not last long as Minister or as man. I see no one ready to accept his mantle when it drops from him. Ten years hence, those who live so long, may see a complete change on the questions on which the public mind has been recently so active and so much mistaken.

"This is bringing philosophy to comfort us in our misfortunes, you will say, and does not mend the present, and it is true enough, but it is just the line of reasoning, I doubt not, which has presented itself to your mind when free from the momentary vexation caused by recent events. I am the least unfortunate of our small section, for a year of idleness and of ill-health has made absence from Parliament familiar to me, and I have contemplated resigning my seat since the

1857. Ær. 53. beginning of 1856. Personally, therefore, to be out is neither strange nor unpleasant, and I am surprised how very little I have cared about the matter on my own account. I hope you can feel somewhat as I do, conscious that we are ostracised because our political creed is in advance of, and our political morality higher than, that of the people for whom we have given up the incessant labours of nearly twenty years. Time will show, and a long time will not be needed to show, the hollowness of the imposture which now rules. Its face may be of brass, but its feet are of clay. . . . .

"It is strange after so much experience that we should be disappointed that opinion goes on so slowly. We have taught what is true in our 'School,' but the discipline was a little too severe for the scholars. Disraeli will say he was right: we are hardly of the English type, and success, political and personal success, cannot afford to reject the use which may be made of ignorance and prejudice among a people. This is his doctrine, and with his views it is true; but as we did not seek personal objects it is not true of us. If we are rejected for peace and for truth, we stand higher before the world and for the future than if we mingled with the patient mediocrities which compose the present Cabinet. . . . . I hope the clouds may break, and that sunshine may come again.

"Ever yours very sincerely,

"JOHN BRIGHT."

After the elections were over, Cobden went to his home in Sussex, and there he remained in retirement for nearly two years. His correspondence shows how sharply he felt the defeat.

To Mr. Moffatt, he writes:—

"*April* 7.—I find a retreat to this drowsy neighbourhood very necessary for my health. I overdid it, in trying to canvass Huddersfield and Manchester at the same time,

and was almost afraid my head was giving way. However, my old medicine, sleep, has nearly restored me. But I am determined to keep out of the ring for the present. It suits me on private and domestic grounds to have been beaten at Huddersfield (where my good friends ought not to have taken me), and although the dose is a little nauseous, the medicine will ultimately be of service to me. But I am persecuted with innumerable letters from kind people, who have taken up the notion that I must require encouragement and condolence. And they have all sorts of projects ready cut and dry for me, as if I could begin a life of agitation again, and repeat the labours of my prime now that I am past the zenith.

1857. ÆT. 53.

"The only incident of the election which hangs about me with a permanent feeling of irritability, is the atrocious treatment Bright has received from the people at Manchester. They are mainly indebted to him for the prosperity which has converted a majority into little better than Tories, and now the base snobs kick away the ladder! I find my scorn boiling over constantly, and can hardly keep my hands, or rather my pen, off them. The case of Gibson is different. He could not have been without the expectation that some day an end would be put to a connexion for which there was no special fitness; and to have sat for nearly eighteen years for Manchester has given him a position which nothing can take away. I do not, however, think he deserved to be left in a minority. But Bright's case is very different. He was one of themselves. You know how valiantly he defended his order against all assailants. He was an honour to his constituents. They had no grievance on account of his peace views, for they knew he was a Quaker when they elected him. To place such a man at the bottom of the poll, when prostrate by excessive labours in the public service, is the most atrocious specimen of political ingrati-

1857. tude I ever encountered. . . . . I do not believe he will be
ÆT. 53 affected in the way you fear by the news. He will, I believe, take it very coolly and philosophically; and I think it will prove probably the best thing that could have happened for his health."

On the same day he writes to Mr. Hargreaves:—"The secret of such a display of snobbishness and ingratitude is in the great prosperity which Lancashire enjoys, and for which it is mainly indebted to Bright; and the result has been to make a large increase to the number of Tories, and to cool down to a genteel tone the politics of the Whigs, until at last the majority find an earnest Radical not sufficiently genteel for their taste. This will go on in the north of England so long as our exports continue to increase at their present rate, and in the natural course of things more Tories will be returned."

The same humour finds vent in some words to Mr. W. S. Lindsay of this date:—

"Did my friend —— make a failure of seconding the Address? I hear so. I have never known a manufacturing representative put into cocked hat and breeches and ruffles, with a sword by his side, to make a speech for the Government, without having his head turned by the feathers and frippery. Generally they give way to a paroxysm of snobbery, and go down on their bellies, and throw dust on their heads, and fling dirt at the prominent men of their own order."

At the end of July a vacancy was made in the representation of Birmingham by the death of Mr. Muntz, and Mr. Bright was quickly chosen to fill the seat. His health seemed to have been so dangerously shaken, that Cobden expressed a natural solicitude on so speedy a return to the agitation of public life. To Mr. Parkes he wrote:—

"*August* 9, 1857.—I cannot help confessing to you my doubts whether Bright will be equal to the task which

he seems bent upon undertaking without much more forbearance. If he break down again, the chances are that he is shelved for life, and may lose even the powers which he is now in secure possession of. I very much fear he allows himself to be pushed forward by others who are interested, from enjoying a reflected share of his greatness, in seeing him again in the House. But I have no reason to suppose that this is the case with his wife and family. I have said as much as I could to urge him to be quiet, but I doubt whether he has the power to divert his mind from politics. He seemed to me to be watching or speculating on the details of political movements whilst he was in Algiers or Italy, pretty much the same as when he was at home. The honest and independent course taken by the people at Birmingham, their exemption from aristocratic snobbery, and their fair appreciation of a democratic son of the people, confirm me in the opinion I have always had that the social and political state of that town is far more healthy than that of Manchester; and it arises from the fact that the industry of the hardware district is carried on by small manufacturers, employing a few men and boys each, sometimes only an apprentice or two; whilst the great capitalists in Manchester form an aristocracy, individual members of which wield an influence over sometimes two thousand persons. The former state of society is more natural and healthy in a moral and political sense. There is a freer intercourse between all classes than in the Lancashire town, where a great and impassable gulf separates the workman from his employer. The great capitalist class formed an excellent basis for the Anti-Corn-Law movement, for they had inexhaustible purses, which they opened freely in a contest where not only their pecuniary interests but their pride as 'an order' was at stake. But I very much doubt whether such a state of society is favourable to a democratic political movement,

1857. and this view I have urged upon Wilson and Bright ever
ÆT. 53. since the League was, or ought to have been, abolished. If Bright should recover his health and be able to head a party for parliamentary reform, in my opinion Birmingham will be a better home for him than Manchester.

"Charles Sumner has been here, and is now on his way to see De Tocqueville. We had some very long adjourned debates, as you may suppose. What a talker he is! One night, or rather morning, I had to warn him to bed at half-past one, which to us rustics is a late sitting, for at this harvest-time folks are thinking of getting up to work soon after that. But excepting for his own health's sake I would have gladly protracted our *noctes* to daylight. It is refreshing to meet with a man of his intellectual calibre and of such accomplishments, one too so capable in every way of playing a politician's part, giving up all to conscience. I really hardly know such a case. *We* can't put ourselves in such a comparison, for we have not the same temptations even had we his powers. For in this aristocratic country we know that the chief seats must be occupied by men of a given class, or their nominees. In his country every post was accessible to him, if he could only speak successfully to Bunkum."

"*July* 28. (*To Mr. Parkes.*)—Very many thanks for your thinking of me sometimes. I am deep in mangolds and pigs, and unless you brought me occasionally in contact with the great maëlstrom of politics, I should be in danger of forgetting that there are such things as Whigs and Tories in the world. Believe me I am in no hurry to get back to the House. When I saw the other day that the House sat till half-past four, I hugged myself, and looked out on the South Downs with a keener relish. The tone of Parliament is unlike anything I have ever witnessed, and I should not like to be made more closely acquainted with it. There is a

spirit of servility, which cannot last; for a really manly 1857.
assembly (which the House of Commons is) will recover its Æт. 53.
self-respect, and the reaction will perhaps be all the stronger from the consciousness which will one day flash upon it that it has been prostrating itself before a brazen image, as hollow as it is impudent. But I am content to wait. It is true that Sumner has offered to come and see me, and if he would stay a few days it would be well for his health, but I expect he will linger in town till he has only a day to give me. I went on Friday to dine at the Bishop of Oxford's to meet Lord Aberdeen, and slept there. The old Earl was looking older and more taciturn than usual. His clothes looked too large for his frame. I should fear he is wasting away, but his northern air, I hope, will set him up again. It is the third year I have had a long *tête-à-tête* with him, and I have always found myself much interested in a thoroughly quiet and homely intercourse with him and his host. . . . .

"In answer to your friend's inquiry about Bowring's truthfulness, you may content yourself with a general description of the *genus sentimentalist*. They are not to be depended on in political action, because they are not masters of their own reasoning powers. They sing songs or declaim about truth, justice, liberty, and the like, but it is only in the same artificial spirit in which they make odes to dew-drops, daisies, &c. They are just as likely to trample on one as the other, notwithstanding. There was Lamartine, the prince of the class, who mouthed so finely about international rights; and yet it has come out that he was just as ready as king or kaiser to march an army into Italy to take a material guarantee for—liberty. See the exhibition of Thackeray at Oxford,[1] and yet he expressed sympathy to me

[1] At a bye-election for Oxford city (July 21) Mr. Thackeray stood against the present Lord Cardwell, and failed by the narrow difference of 67, in a gross poll of 2103.

1867. and Bright at the Reform Club during the war. Then
ÆT. 53. there is his great contrast, Dickens, for ever writing of his desire to elevate the masses and to put down insolence in high places. I saw a note from him in which he refused to sign a petition for the repeal of the taxes on knowledge, on the express ground that he would not promote a deluge of printer's ink in England similar to what he had seen in America. The most reliable politicians are your wiry logicians of the Jefferson or Calhoun stamp. They may be liable to false starts, but when once you know their premises you can calculate their course and where to find them.'

"*Midhurst, June* 6. (*To Mr. Ewart.*)—I must confess the proceedings of your Hon. House have done much to reconcile me to my rustication, for its tone is subservient even to sycophancy. We have had the 'Barebones Parliament,' the 'Long Parliament,' the 'Unlearned Parliament,' but the present ought to be named the 'Servile Parliament.' From such an assembly I confess I am not sorry to be excluded. There has always been until now a body of men, sometimes more and sometimes fewer in the House, who counted themselves for something better than Whigs or Tories, and who were bent on securing something for the public as the price of their support of the more Liberal section of the aristocracy. These men, whether numbering thirty or eighty, were the pioneers of every good work. As a party they seem no longer to have an existence in this Parliament. When they reappear, and the public have recovered their taste for earnest politics, I hope I shall be of their number; but till then the House of Commons would not suit me, or I suit it.

"*Dec.* 3. (*To Mr. Moffatt.*)—It is very kind and friendly in you, as usual, to think of me. This post has also brought a letter from Lancashire, saying some of the leaders at Ashton would wish me to succeed to poor Hindley. But I have

resolved neither to stand nor sit for any place; and this resolution will certainly be adhered to for a year, probably for the rest of my working days. I am not sulking or shamming, but acting from motives of a personal nature, and which no political considerations will be sufficiently powerful to overcome. If half a dozen constituencies were to offer to return me free of expense I should decline them all. I shall be glad, should you at any time hear of any movement in my favour, if you will discourage it, without giving me occasion to offer explanations which are painful to me. The truth is I cannot leave home for forty-eight hours, and preserve that tranquillity and elasticity of spirit which is necessary to success in public life. Under the circumstances, I am therefore useless anywhere but in my family. There might have been a state of things, indeed there has been, when I sacrificed every domestic consideration for public duty; but there is now no motive or justification for my doing so."

The actual life of the House of Commons which has invincible attractions for so many men, seems to have had no particular charm to Cobden. At the beginning of the session of 1857 he described to a friend the disagreeable effect upon him of bad air and long speeches. "I don't know whether you feel yourself similarly affected by the air of the House, but after sitting there for two or three hours I find my head useless for any other purpose but aching. I find my brain throbbing, as though it were ready to burst; and the pain returns upon me as soon as I awake in the morning. It seems as if the air were dried and cooked to such an extent as to rob it of its vital properties. My reasoning powers are in abeyance while under the roof of the House, and if the symptoms continue and no remedy be called for by others, likely to effect a change, I shall seriously consider whether I ought to continue to

1857. hold a trust which I am rendered physically and mentally
ÆT. 53. incapable of fulfilling."

"I came away on Tuesday," he continues, "after listening for two hours and a half to Disraeli. I wish there could be some Bessemer's power invented for shortening the time of speaking in the House. My belief, after a long experience, is that a man may say all that he ought to utter at one 'standing' in an hour, excepting a budget speech or a government explanation, when documents are read. The Sermon on the Mount may be read in twenty minutes; the Lord's Prayer takes one minute to repeat; Franklin and Washington never spoke more than ten minutes at a time."

In the autumn of 1857 there was some prospect of a vacancy for the borough of Finsbury, and a movement was started in favour of Cobden as a candidate. Nothing came of it, and it is doubtful, as we shall presently see, whether at that moment his private interests would have allowed him to return to public life. In the beginning of 1858 he received one of the pleasantest of social compliments, in his election as a member of the Athenæum Club by the special favour of the Committee. In the course of the same year his brother, Frederick, died at Dunford. He had suffered such excruciating torture for some time past that to himself death was almost welcome, but Cobden may well have felt a sharp pang at the loss of one to whom he had been all his life bound by the ties of so affectionate an intimacy.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE INDIAN MUTINY—PRIVATE AFFAIRS—SECOND JOURNEY TO AMERICA.

The elections had barely taken place before the country 1857.
was thrilled from end to end as it had been on no occasion ÆT. 53.
before, by the appalling horrors of the Indian Mutiny. Cobden had always watched the affairs of this great dependency with jealous and unfriendly eye. As a military and despotic government; as an acquisition of impolitic violence and fraud; as the seat of unsafe finance; for these and other reasons, he had always taken his place among those, and they were much fewer then than they are now, who cannot see any advantage either to the natives or their foreign masters in this vast possession. He had said as much in the House of Commons so far back as 1853, when the renewal of the Company's Charter was under discussion. When the Mutiny came, then like every one else, he said, he could think of nothing else. Three or four of his letters will be enough to show what he had to say upon the most hideous occurrence in our history.

"*Midhurst, Oct.* 16, 1857. (*To Mr. Ashworth.*)—I thought I could have withdrawn myself for a time from public affairs, but every Indian mail quite overturns my resolution, and weans me back from my farm and my household, and makes me as much a politician in thought and feeling as ever. And yet I confess to you that this crisis in the East makes

1857. Æt. 53. me very grateful for the accident which released me from my Parliamentary duties, and thereby relieved me from the necessity of making any public declaration of opinion on the subject; for the more I reflect on it, the less do I feel able to take any part which would harmonize with the views and prejudices of the British public.

"I am, and always have been, of opinion (see the enclosed extract from *Hansard*) that we have attempted an impossibility in giving ourselves to the task of governing one hundred millions of Asiatics. God and his visible natural laws have opposed insuperable obstacles to the success of such a scheme. But if the plan were practicable at the great cost and risk which we *now* see to be inseparable from it, what advantage can it confer on ourselves? We all know the motive which took the East India Company to Asia—monopoly, not merely as towards foreigners, but against the rest of their own countrymen. But now that the trade of Hindoostan is thrown open to all the world on equal terms, what exclusive advantage can we derive to compensate for all the trouble, cost, and risk of ruling over such a people?—a people which has shown itself, after a century of contact with us, to be capable of crimes which would revolt any savage tribe of whom we read in Dr. Livingstone's narrative, and which had never seen a Christian or European till he penetrated among them.

"The religious people who now tell us that we must hold India to convert it, ought, I should think, to be convinced by what has passed that sending red coats as well as black to Christianize a people is not the most likely way to insure the blessing of God on our missionary efforts.

"I am aware that it is quite useless to preach these doctrines in the present temper of the people of this country; but if forced to appear in public to offer my opinion on the topics of the day, I could not ignore this greatest of all

texts, and therefore I cling to my shell here because I know that this is not the moment to give utterance to my ideas with any chance of doing good. 1857. ÆT. 53.

"Unfortunately for me I can't even co-operate with those who seek to 'reform' India, for I have no faith in the power of England to govern that country at all permanently; and though I should like to see the Company abolished—because that is a screen between the English nation and a full sight of its awful responsibilities—yet I do not believe in the possibility of the Crown governing India under the control of Parliament. If the House of Commons were to renounce all responsibility for domestic legislation, and give itself exclusively to the task of governing one hundred millions of Asiatics, it would fail. Hindoostan must be ruled by those who live on that side of the globe. Its people will prefer to be ruled badly—*according to our notions*—by its own colour, kith and kin, than to submit to the humiliation of being better governed by a succession of transient intruders from the antipodes.

"These, however, are, I confess, opinions of a somewhat abstract kind, and not adapted for the practical work of the day. What is to be done now? Put down the military revolt in justice to the peaceable population, who are at the mercy of the armed mutineers. It is our duty to do so. We can do it, and I have no doubt it will be done. But then comes our difficulty. With the experience of the present year we can never trust a native force with arms again, with the feelings of security which we formerly indulged. Who will live in the interior of India in future, beyond the range of our forts or the sound of the regimental drum? Certainly no one with wife and children to love and care for. Yet we cannot possibly administer the affairs of that country without a native force, and we are now actually raising an army of Sikhs, the most warlike of

1857. Æt. 53. our subjects in all Asia, whom we disarmed when we took possession of the country, and of whom Lord Dalhousie said, in a letter, not ten years ago, that every man was against us!

"No; there is no future but trouble and loss and disappointment and, I fear, crime in India, and they are doing the people of this country the greatest service who tell them the honest truth according to their convictions, and prepare them for abandoning at some future time the thankless and impossible task."

"*August* 24. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—If we could meet, I should be glad to have a whole week's adjourned debates on public matters with you; and I could write you long letters too, but somehow I always feel myself restrained by the fear that my correspondence does you harm by keeping the brain needlessly on the old scent. I wish you to discard politics from your thoughts; how then can I with consistency dose you with my political speculations? Besides, to tell you the truth, I can find nothing very cheerful to remark upon in relation to public matters. The proceedings of the House have ceased to interest me; and when I glance at the conclusion of the reports, and sometimes read 'adjourned at a quarter to three o'clock,' I hug myself with delight at the recollection that I am not one of the *dramatis personæ* of the humiliating performance.

"The only subject that binds my attention fast to the newspapers is this horrible Indian business. There has been nothing in history since the St. Domingo revolt to compare in fiendish ferocity with the atrocities by the Sepoys upon the women and children who have fallen into their hands. One stands aghast and dumbfoundered at the reflection that after a century of intercourse with us, the natives of India suddenly exhibit themselves greater savages than any of the North American Indians who have been brought

into contact with the white race. It is clear that they cannot have been inspired with either love or respect by what they have seen of the English. There must be a fierce spirit of resentment, not unmixed with contempt for the ruling class, pervading the native mind. From the moment that I had satisfied myself that a feeling of alienation was constantly *increasing* with both the natives and the English (we had some striking evidence to this effect before our Committee in 1853), I made up my mind that it must end in trouble sooner or later. It is impossible that a people can permanently be used for their own obvious and conscious degradation. The entire scheme of our Indian rule is based upon the assumption that the natives will be the willing instruments of their own humiliation. Nay, so confident are we in this faith, that we offer them the light of Christianity and a free press, and still believe that they will not have wit enough to measure their rights by our own standard.

"Chance has thrown me in the society of some ladies who have lately returned from India, where they were accustomed to barrack life, their husbands being officers in native regiments. I find the common epithet applied to our fellow-subjects in Hindostan is *nigger*. One of these ladies took some credit for her condescension in allowing a native officer, answering to the rank of a subaltern, to sit down in her presence when he came for orders to her husband. All this might have been borne, though with difficulty, if the English with whom the natives came in contact displayed exalted virtues and high intellectual powers. But I fear the traits most conspicuous in our countrymen have been of a very different character. A low morale and an absence of mental energy have been the most conspicuous faults of the British officers, and the business of the regiments has more and more fallen into the hands of the natives. What is now

1857. witnessed in India—the assassination and massacres on one
ÆT. 53. side, and the wholesale executions on the other—must for ever perpetuate and deepen this feeling of alienation.[1]

"I can see nothing but increased difficulties in future in consequence of the almost indiscriminate slaughter with which every commissioned officer and his drum-head court are visiting the Sepoys that fall into their power. Unless this is persevered in until the 100,000 mutineers are hung up, the only effect will be to convert those who escape into worse assassins and incendiaries than before. How are we to maintain despotic sway in future over 100,000,000 of Asiatics (for it must be undisguised despotism henceforth) and preserve our own freedom at home? Will it be possible to find a sufficient number of recruits in England to keep up a sufficient army for this purpose?

"These are questions that I shall not answer at present, but I confess to you that I have no faith in the doctrine that by any possible reforms we can govern India well, or continue to hold it permanently. God and nature have put a visible and insuperable obstacle in the way of our rash and audacious scheme. And if it be true, as even Voltaire believed it to be, that there is 'un Dieu rétributeur et vengeur,' the deeds perpetrated by the British in times past, and still more the bloody deeds now being enacted, and which all arise from our own original aggression upon distant and unoffending communities, will be visited with unerring justice upon us or our children. But I am sinning

[1] Almost on the very same day Lord Elgin wrote in his Journal:—"It is a terrible business, this living among inferior races. I have seldom from man or woman since I came to the East heard a sentence which was reconcilable with the hypothesis that Christianity had ever come into the world. Detestation, contempt, ferocity, vengeance, whether Chinamen or Indians be the object."—*Lord Elgin's Journals*, p. 199. (August 21, 1857.) On March 29, 1858, there is a similar entry:—"The truth is that the whole world just now are raving mad with a passion for killing and slaying."

against my own rule in thus venting my croakings upon you. . . . 1857. Æt. 53

"P.S. You hint at the possibility of Manchester taking me in case of poor Potter's death. I don't think the offer will ever be made, but I am quite sure that there is no demonstration of the kind that would induce me (apart from my determination not at present to stand for any place) to put myself in the hands of the people who without more cause then than now struck down men whose politics are identically my own. To confess my honest belief, I regard the Manchester constituency, now that their gross pocket question is settled, as a very unsound, and to us a very unsafe body."

September 22. („)—I am glad to see your handwriting again. Although I knew our minds were busy in one and the same direction, yet I abstained from sending you my cogitations, for I was fearful of adding fuel to fire. These Indian horrors give me a perpetual shudder. The awful atrocities perpetrated upon women and children almost give rise to the impious doubt whether this world is under the government of an all-wise and just Providence. What crime had they committed to merit the infliction of tortures and death? Verily the sins of the fathers have been visited on the children to the third and fourth generations! And how can it be otherwise in the case of a nation? For if a collective crime be perpetrated, and a community be visited with retributive justice, even an hour after the commission of the deed, those who have entered life in the interval must participate in the penalty. We can see that it must be so, but not that it ought to be.

"These fiendish outrages upon the defenceless—the propensity displayed in so many places to unparalleled cruelties—have amazed me more than anything that ever occurred in my time. We have read of something of the kind in St.

1857. Domingo, in the French Revolution, and in the revolt of
ÆT. 53. the Polish peasants, but in our time nothing like it has happened, and I would not have believed that any tribe of men which had been in contact with civilized life could have committed such barbarities. But we seem in danger of forgetting our own Christianity, and descending to a level with these monsters who have startled the world with their deeds. It is terrible to see our middle-class journals and speakers calling for the destruction of Delhi, and the indiscriminate massacre of prisoners. Leaving humanity out of the question, nothing could have been more impolitic than the wholesale execution of common soldiers with which we attempted from the first to put down the rebellion. Had it been a mutiny of a company or a regiment, it would have been of doubtful policy to hang or blow from the guns all the *privates* concerned. But when an entire army of 100,000 men have planted the standard of revolt, it is no longer a mutiny, but a rebellion and civil war. To attempt to hang all that fall into our power can only lead to reprisals and wholesale carnage on both sides.

"Did you observe that the men who swam ashore at Cawnpore after the boats, in which were the garrison who had been promised a safe passage, had been treacherously sunk, were blown from the guns on successive days, no doubt in imitation of our treatment of the Sepoys? To read the letters of our officers at the commencement of the outbreak, it seemed as if every subaltern had the power to hang or shoot as many natives as he pleased, and they spoke of the work of blood with as much levity as if they were hunting wild animals. The last accounts would lead one to fear that God is not favouring our cause, and that too many of our countrymen are meeting the fate which was intended for the natives.

"But the future—what is in the distance? The most cer-

tain and immediate result is that we shall have a bankrupt 1857.
empire of 150 millions of people on our backs. The end of Æt. 53.
this year will leave the Company minus not much short of 100 millions sterling, including guaranteed railways, &c. And then comes all the sacrifices of life and treasure which we shall make to put down the rebellion and reconquer India. And nobody asks what benefit we shall derive from our success! You know my opinion of old: that I never could feel any enthusiasm for the reform of our Indian Government, for I failed to satisfy myself that it was possible for us to rule that vast empire with advantage to its people or ourselves. I now regard the task as utterly hopeless. Recent and present events are placing an impassable gulf between the races. Conquerors and conquered can never live together again with confidence or comfort. It will be a happy day when England has not an acre of territory in Continental Asia. But how such a state of things is to be brought about, is more than I can tell. I bless my stars that I am not in a position to be obliged to give public utterance to my views on the all-absorbing topic of the day, for I could not do justice to my own convictions and possess the confidence of any constituency in the kingdom. For where do we find even an individual who is not imbued with the notion that England would sink to ruin if she were deprived of her Indian Empire? Leave me, then, to my pigs and sheep, which are not labouring under any such delusions. . . . ."

"*October* 18. (*To Colonel Fitzmayer.*)—Do we find that Government and Parliament acquit themselves so well in domestic matters that they have a surplus of efficiency and energy for Hindoostan? Shall we give education to India, or reform its criminals, or abate its crime, or moderate its religious bigotry and intolerance? Can we do these things at home? If a Board of Works can't give us a

1857. common sewer for London, is it likely to cover India with
ÆT. 53. canals for irrigation? If Catholic and Protestant can't live together in Belfast, excepting under something like martial law, are we the people to teach Christian charity and toleration to the Hindoos? With such views as mine, what am I to do in public life in the midst of all this excitement and enthusiasm for reconquering and *Christianizing* India? I confess I think myself lucky that I can, with a fair plea, exempt myself from the task of speaking at all in public on the subject, for not having the responsible trust of M.P., I am not bound to shock people with my sentiments. For a politician of my principles there is really no standing-ground. The manufacturers of Yorkshire and Lancashire look upon India and China as a field of enterprise which can only be kept open to them by force, and indeed they are willing, apparently, to be at all the cost of holding open the door of the whole of Asia, for the rest of the world to trade on the same terms as themselves. How few of those who fought for the repeal of the Corn Law, really understand the full meaning of Free Trade principles! If you talk to our Lancashire friends they argue that unless we occupied India there would be no trade with that country, or that somebody else would monopolize it, forgetting that this is the old protectionist theory which they used formerly to idicule. India was a great centre and source of commerce for the civilized world before Englishmen took to wearing breeches, and it was the renown of its wealth and productiveness which first attracted us there. I am by no means so clear as some people, that we have added greatly to its commerce. Certainly the trade of European countries has increased in a greater ratio than that of India during the last century.

"However, I have wearied you with my abstractions. The practical business in hand is to put down the military

mutiny, which, in justice to our own subjects, we are bound to do. I fear that in the process we shall familiarize ourselves with deeds of blood which may tend to make us a cruel and sanguinary nation, and then God help Bolton or Oldham, if some day from sudden suffering its passionate multitude should set the middle classes and *their* Horse Guards at defiance; for assuredly then they who now cry for the destruction of Delhi would not be less merciful to the bricks and mortar of Lancashire."

"*Nov.* 22. (*To Mr. White, the Member for Brighton.*)— . . . . You have seized upon the most important of our social and political questions in the laws affecting the transfer of land. It is astonishing that the people at large are so tacit in their submission to the perpetuation of the feudal system in this country as it affects the property in land, so long after it has been shattered to pieces in every other country except Russia. The reason is, I suppose, that the great increase of our manufacturing system has given such an expansive system of employment to the population, that the want of land as a field of investment and employment for labour has been comparatively little felt. So long as this prosperity of our manufactures continues, there will be no great outcry against the landed monopoly. If adversity were to fall on the nation, your huge feudal properties would soon be broken up, and along with them the hereditary system of government under which we contentedly live and *thrive.* When I was travelling on the Continent, I found among the thinking part of the population in France, Italy, and Germany, a great feeling of surprise that the men who had abolished the Corn Laws had not also abolished the monopoly of land; and they were quite puzzled, and almost incredulous, when I told them that there was little feeling against our custom of primogeniture even among the rural population of England. Another reason may help to

1858. account for our indifference to the subject. We have been
ÆT. 54. taught to consider our colonies as an outlet for the population, and this not by a process of expatriation to a foreign land, but by emigration to other parts of our own territory. Then there is our insular vanity, that scorns to follow the example of other countries and that lays us open to the influence of flattery, of which John Bull will accept any quantity, however coarsely laid on, in place of more substantial payment of what is honestly his due."

"*London, May* 16, 1858. (*To G. Combe.*)— . . . I have come to London for a few weeks, and have brought my wife and little girls. We have been staying with our friends in a succession of visits, and I have seen a little of the politicians from whom I have been so long separated.

"I am afraid our national character is being deteriorated, and our love of freedom in danger of being impaired by what is passing in India. Is it possible that we can play the part of despot and butcher there without finding our character deteriorated at home? Were not the ancient Greeks and Romans corrupted and demoralized by their Asiatic conquests, and may we not share their fate, though in a different way? Then comes the question which you have so ably put in your letter. 'What possible benefit can we derive from our Indian conquests?' I confess I take a gloomy view of our prospects in that quarter. The English people will not give up Hindoostan, any more than they did North America, without years of exhausting war.

"It is more and more my conviction that the task of governing *despotically* 150 millions of people at a distance of twelve thousand miles cannot be executed by a constitutional Government. It ought to be done, if at all, by a despot, whose rule is concentrated, and less liable to personal changes than our representative forms admit. With a change of Government every six or twelve months it is impossible that we

can have a continuous plan or a real responsibility. Since I have been in London, I have heard scarcely a word about the best mode of governing the millions of India. The only talk is about the chance of turning out one Ministry and bringing in another." 1858. ÆT. 54.

"*March* 28. (*To Mr. Gilpin.*)—What a pretentious and hypocritical people we are in our dealings with the outside world! How we abuse and bully King Bomba because he will not govern his lazzaroni according to our notions of constitutionalism! But when you propose to apply a little of our love of liberty to our own fellow-subjects in India 'oh! oh!' is the reply you meet with in the House. Yet you would have no difficulty in carrying the cheers of the said House for any proposal to put the slaves in America or Cuba immediately on the same political level as their masters. This nation will meet with a terrible check some day, unless it makes a little better progress in the science of self-knowledge."

"*October* 30. („)— . . . Is Klapka gone? He mentioned to me in conversation some views about our Indian massacres of private men, that I should like to be allowed to quote some day. I remember he expressed himself as a soldier with some disgust on the subject. He said the indiscriminate destruction of rank and file was unprecedented in modern times, and he stated that anybody accustomed to armies knew that when a whole regiment or army fell from its allegiance, the great body of the privates really took no active part, that they went with the officers as a matter of instinct, and that perhaps with the exception of a few violent ringleaders the rest hardly knew anything about it. In some cases a minority would in their hearts be opposed to the mutiny, but they had no choice but go with the rest. He argued that to slay all alike in the field or on the gallows was terrible."

1858. Ær. 54. A few months before this, Cobden had felt for an instant that he would have liked to be in the House. Mr. Gibson, who had found a seat at Ashton-under-Lyne, beat Lord Palmerston on the Conspiracy to Murder Bill (Feb. 20), and the Minister who had returned to power in triumph eleven months before, suddenly saw himself compelled to resign. "When I read," said Cobden to Mr. Lindsay, "the account of Bright and Gibson walking up to the table of the House to pass sentence upon that venerable political sinner, I could not help thinking what a fine historical picture the artist missed. There was surely something more than chance in bringing back these two men to inflict summary punishment on the man who flattered himself a few months ago that he had put his heel on their political necks. For the first time I felt regret at not being there to witness that scene of retributive justice."

On the feeling between England and France which had arisen in connexion with the circumstances of the Conspiracy to Murder Bill, he wrote to his friend, Michel Chevalier:—

"*July* 13.—It is useless our pursuing the *tu quoque* argument, otherwise I should remind you that our estrangement has all sprung out of the unfortunate course pursued by your Government at the time of the Orsini horror. Never did your Emperor fall into such a mistake as to seek to widen the responsibility of that mad outrage by making it the ground of domestic legislation of a restrictive character and of diplomatic negotiation, requiring fresh safeguards from foreign Governments: all which assumed that others besides those frenzied Italians were plotting against his life. To assume that assassination had sympathizers in England, France, or elsewhere, was an insult to humanity. His policy should have been the very opposite. He should have thrust aside the injudicious advisers who recommended such a course, and should have loudly proclaimed his belief that men of all

nations would equally join in condemning the devilish act: 1858.
and he should have placed himself under the protection of Ær. 54.
that sentiment of horror which was universally entertained, whilst he might have frankly owned that his life, like that of every other man, was at the mercy of those who chose to cast off all the restraints of reason, religion, and humanity. Such a course as this, narrowing the responsibility of the atrocious act to those who were its wicked authors, would have attracted the sympathy of the whole civilized world. But it is useless now to dwell on these reminiscences. I hope the really gallant conduct of our Queen in paying a visit to Cherbourg, and thus giving a slap in the face to those mischievous fools who are constantly raising the cry of a French invasion, will have the effect of soothing all the irritation on your side."

The second Administration of Lord Derby was formed, and Mr. Lindsay asked for Cobden's view of the new political situation. In reply he once more preached a sermon on the old text.

"*March* 23.—'The present men are more honest, and they are certainly more obliging than the last.' In this I agree with you, and it might have been said of any Tory Government as compared with any Whig one since I have been in the political ring. I remember when I came into the House in 1841, after the general election which gave Peel a majority of ninety, I found the Tories more civil in the intercourse of the lobbies and the refreshment-rooms than the Whigs. It runs through all departments. It seems as if the Whig leaders always thought it necessary to snub the Radicals, to satisfy the Tories they were not dangerous politicians. But I do not blame them, for they live by it. I do blame those advanced Liberals who allow themselves to be thus used and abused. There is no remedy but in the greater self-respect of the middle class. I fear we have been going the

1858. other way for the last ten years. The great prosperity of
ÆT. 54. the country made Tories of us all. . . . . During my experience the higher classes never stood so high in relative social and political rank, as compared with other classes, as at present. The middle class have been content with the very crumbs from their table. The more contempt a man like Palmerston (as intense an aristocrat at heart as any of them) heaped on them, the louder they cheered him. Twenty years ago, when a hundred members of the House used to muster at the call of Hume or Warburton to compel the Whigs to move on under threats of desertion, there seemed some hope of the middle class setting up for themselves; but now there is no such sign. . . . .

"You ask me my view of the political situation. It is hard fate for me to be obliged to choose between Derby and Palmerston, but if compelled to do so, I should certainly prefer the former. Nothing can be so humiliating to us as a party or a nation as to see that venerable political impostor at the head of affairs. But how will you prevent his return to power? . . . . Half a dozen great families meet at Walmer and dispose of the rank and file of the party, just as I do the lambs that I am now selling for your aldermen's table. And I very much doubt whether you can put an end to this ignominious state of things. Until you can, I don't think you are playing a part in any noble drama."

During this period of withdrawal from active public life, Cobden was greatly harassed by private anxieties. As there was always much ill-natured gossip about his affairs, it is well to state the facts as they were. With a portion of the proceeds of the national testimonial Cobden, as we have already seen, had purchased the little property which had belonged to his forefathers. The rest, or most of the rest, he had invested in the shares of an American railway. The Illinois Central is the great line from North to South, with

its headquarters at Chicago, taking its course right through the centre of the rich valley of the Mississippi, and joining the great river itself at Saint Louis, Cairo, and New Orleans. Very large tracts of the finest alluvial soil in Illinois were ceded to the company on each side of the line. The company therefore had two sources of profit, one arising from the sale of the lands, the other from the traffic on the line itself which in grain was very large and daily increasing. Such property was clearly a legitimate investment to persons who, if more capital were called up than was at first anticipated, could afford to meet the calls upon their shares without inconvenience.[1] With a man in Cobden's position the case was different. In this matter, however, he was not disposed to listen to the advice of his friends, who recommended him only to hold bonds or paid-up shares. "I recollect," says Mr. W. S. Lindsay, "having many conversations with Cobden on this subject. I agreed with him entirely as to the prospects of the line, but we differed as to the time when the large prospective profits of the undertaking could be realized. He thought they were close at hand; I, on the contrary, held the opinion that, while all the land would in time find purchasers, they would rather belong to the next generation than to our own. In this instance my views came true. The land found purchasers, but not to the extent nor with the rapidity anticipated. The directors had calculated that the proceeds from the sale of the lands would enable them to complete the line, and consequently render further calls upon the shareholders unnecessary. In this they were mistaken."

"Cobden," Mr. Lindsay goes on to say, "viewed his investments in an entirely different light from that in which they would be seen by an ordinary man of business. He

[1] The 100 dollar ordinary shares were lately at 150, and are now 138.

1858. ÆT. 54. thought of the overcrowded cities of Europe, and of the masses of people who on this side of the Atlantic were seeking, or about to seek, new homes in the far West. His mind surveyed at a glance the vast expanse of rich, unoccupied virgin land in the mighty valley of the Mississippi, through which the Illinois Central ran its course—a valley where millions of people from the old world could find profitable employment. He was aware of the great and rapidly increasing facilities which would enable the intending emigrant to reach this most tempting field at less cost than their fathers could have travelled from Glasgow to London; and for these reasons he came to the conclusion that the demand for the company's land would be both great and immediate, and the money derived from the sale would be more than sufficient to complete all the works connected with the railway. But Cobden was no speculator in the ordinary sense of the word."

In a letter tô Mr. Moffatt, with whom he was in constant correspondence on the subject at this time, Cobden shows how conscious he was of the view which a hard-headed man of business would be likely to take of what he was doing. At the beginning of 1858, Mr. Osborn, the Chairman of the Railway, was in England, and visited him at Dunford.

"Osborn was so candid with me," Cobden writes, "so disinterested and friendly in his advice, that I could not help suspecting that a very good friend of mine had whispered in his ear something to this effect. 'Say nothing to feed his sanguine views. He has already become *tête montée* about the Illinois; but rather throw in a word of caution about putting too many eggs in one basket. He is a worn-out agitator, out of business, with a young family. Such people ought not to become speculators. As a rule your public men, and especially your revolutionary leaders, make unsuccessful men of business. They look too high and too

far, and others who fire at a shorter range beat them in the field. Besides, they look at things too much in the gross, neglect details, and disregard the element of time, which in speculation is everything. Here is Cobden dealing with Illinois Central as if they were going to yield him a profit next quarter-day. Warn him that it will take many years to realize all his expectations.' Am I not right in my surmise?"

Whether the surmise was right or not, it is clear that the investment, however sound, was not a prudent one for a man who had no spare capital, and who needed income. Cobden was greatly inconvenienced by outstanding loans which were raised to pay the calls. In connexion with them, it is for the honour of human nature that we should mention an extraordinary example of grateful and considerate munificence. The late Mr. Thomasson of Bolton, hearing from Mr. Slagg, their common friend, that Cobden was embarrassed by one of these outstanding loans for the Illinois shares, amounting to several thousand pounds, released the shares and sent them to Cobden, with a request that he would do him the favour to accept their freedom at his hands "in acknowledgment of his vast services to his country and mankind." On a later occasion, when the same difficulty recurred for the same reasons, Mr. Thomasson went down to Midhurst, ascertained the circumstances, and insisted that Cobden should accept a still larger sum, refusing a formal acknowledgment, and handing it over in such a form that the transaction was not known to any one but Cobden and himself. After Mr. Thomasson's death, there was found among his private papers a little memorandum of his advances, containing these magnanimous words: "I lament that the greatest benefactor of mankind since the Inventor of printing should be placed in a position where his public usefulness is compromised and impeded by sordid personal cares; but I have done something as my share of what is due to him

1858. Ær. 54. from his countrymen to set him free for further efforts in the cause of human progress. My children will hereafter be proud that their father at all events recognized his claims. Their fortunes are to a great extent the result of Richard Cobden's sacrifices."

It was in connexion with the Illinois Railway that Cobden made his second voyage to the United States. He went on behalf of other English shareholders to examine the line and its management on the spot. He remained in the country for three months. Everything that he saw delighted him. The material and moral progress since his visit in 1835 realized all his expectations. "It is the universal hope of rising in the social scale," he told Mr. Bright, "which is the key to much of the superiority that is visible in this country. It accounts for the orderly self-respect which is the great characteristic of the masses in the United States. . . . All this tends to the argument that the political condition of a people is very much dependent on its economical fate."

So far as the immediate object of his journey went Cobden declared himself to be more than satisfied. "As respects the main question," he wrote to his wife, "as to the ultimate success of the undertaking, I have no doubt whatever that it will prove the best railroad investment in America. But unfortunately it does not suit me to wait, and nearly all I have is at stake." In another letter to Mrs. Cobden he writes: "My thoughts are much with you and the dear children. I feel great anxiety to know that you are settled. Everything has gone as unluckily as possible with me. I sometimes feel almost unnerved, great as is my energy and natural buoyancy." As we shall see presently, the clouds vanished quickly from his spirit, as soon as ever he saw a piece of useful work to be done.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RETURN FROM AMERICA.—THE NEW MINISTRY.

DURING Cobden's absence, great events came to pass in the parliamentary world. Mr. Disraeli introduced his Reform Bill (Feb., 1859), which included the famous "fancy" franchises, and the use of voting papers. The Conservatives did not like the Bill, and two of their most respected leaders, Mr. Henley and Mr. Walpole, quitted the Ministry rather than be parties to it. The Whigs objected to it as an encroachment on their own political preserves. Mr. Bright denounced it as absurd and irritating, disturbing everything and settling nothing. The Government were defeated by a majority of thirty-nine in a house of six hundred and twenty-one members. They dissolved Parliament three weeks afterwards, and the writs for its successor were issued before the end of April.

1859.

ÆT. 55.

The men of Rochdale met and resolved to choose Cobden as the Liberal candidate. Mr. Bright went to their meeting and commended to them his "political associate, his political brother," in a manly and cordial record of Cobden's past career. Cobden had told him that he would rather sit for Rochdale than for any other borough in England; for Rochdale Liberalism, he said, had heart enough in it "to back up a man against the aristocratic section of the legislature." Cobden was eventually returned without a contest.

1859. not see a prospect of amalgamating the Liberal party during
ÆT. 55. my life-time.

"In these circumstances I confess I think it is a DUTY for you to accept the office of President of the Board of Trade.

"I remain,

"Yours faithfully,

"J. RUSSELL."

Cobden arrived in the Mersey on June 29, and in a letter written the next day to Mrs. Cobden, described what happened :—

"*Manchester, June* 30, 1859.—I had but a moment yesterday in Liverpool to apprise you of my safe arrival in England. As I came up the Mersey, I little dreamed of the reception which awaited me. Crowds of friends were ready to greet and cheer me; and before I left the ship a packet of letters was put in my hand, containing one from Lord Palmerston, offering me a seat in the Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade, and another from Lord John Russell, urging me in the very strongest terms to accept it. There were letters from Moffatt, Gilpin, and a great many others, advising me not to refuse the offer.

"I was completely taken by surprise by all this, for I had heard nothing of the change of government, and was twenty-five days without having seen the latest news from England, namely eleven days' passage, and fourteen days which we were behind the news when I left Quebec.

"I went on shore and proceeded to the hotel, where my troubles began. More than a hundred of the leading men of Liverpool assembled in the large room to present me with an address, which was put into my hand by Mr. William Brown. . . . . Afterwards Mr. Robertson Gladstone, from the Financial Reform Association, Mr. Rathbone, from the American Chamber of Commerce, and the President of the

Peace Society, all presented addresses, to which I was obliged, without a moment's notice, and with my head still swimming with the motion of the sea, to deliver replies. It was really like killing one with kindness.' I have come on here [to Manchester] to see my friends, and hear what they have to say. A deputation from Rochdale is over also. And I have an address from a number of persons, including Bazley and H. Ashworth, wishing me to accept the offer of a seat in the Cabinet. Indeed, almost without exception, everybody, Radicals, peace men, and all, are trying to persuade me to it. 1859. Ær. 55.

"Now it really seems to me that they must all have gone mad, for with my recorded opinions of Lord Palmerston's public conduct during the last dozen years, *in which opinions I have experienced no change,* were I suddenly to jump at the offer of a place under him, I should ruin myself in my own self-respect, and ultimately lose the confidence of the very men who are in this moment of excitement urging me to enter his Cabinet. So great is the pressure put on me, that if it were Lord Granville, or even Lord John, at the head of affairs, I should be obliged, greatly against my will, to be a Right Honourable. But to take office now, without a single declaration of change of view regarding his public conduct, would be so monstrous a course, that nothing on earth shall induce me to do it. I am going to town this afternoon, and shall forward him my answer on my arrival. I listen to all my friends and say nothing, but my mind is made up."

On arriving a day or two later in London, Cobden lost no time in calling upon Lord Palmerston. He wrote a full account of all that passed between them to Mr. Sale, his brother-in-law in Manchester.

"*London,* 4*th July,* 1859.—I thought it best on my arrival in town to go *first* to Palmerston, and explain plainly and frankly everything. On calling on him I was most plea-

1859. santly welcomed, and we talked as usual for a few minutes
ÆT. 55. on everything but what I went about. At length I broke the ice in this way. 'You have acted in so manly and magnanimous a manner in pressing me to take office in your Cabinet, that I feel bound to come and talk to you without reserve upon the subject. My case is this. For the last twelve years I have been the systematic and constant assailant of the principle on which your foreign policy has been carried on. I believed you to be warlike, intermeddling and quarrelsome, and that your policy was calculated to embroil us with foreign nations. At the same time I have expressed a general want of confidence in your domestic politics. Now I may have been altogether wrong in my views; it is possible I may have been, but I put it candidly to you whether it ought to be in your Cabinet, whilst holding a post of high honour and emolument derived from you, that I should make the first avowal of a change of opinion respecting your public policy? Should I not expose myself to severe suspicions, and deservedly so, if I were under these circumstances to step from an Atlantic steamer into your Cabinet? Understand, I beg, that I have no personal feelings which prevent me from accepting your offer. I have opposed you as the supposed representative of what I believed to be dangerous principles. If I have ever been personally offensive in my opposition it was not intended, and assuredly you never gave me any justification for such a course.'

"In reply he disclaimed any feelings of a personal kind, and said that even if there had been any personalities, they never ought to be remembered for three months; and he added in a laughing way that he thought Gibson had hit him quite as hard as I had. Then he commenced to combat my objections, and to offer, with apparently great sincerity, a variety of arguments to show that I ought to enter the Cabinet,

dwelling particularly on the fact that as questions of foreign policy were now uppermost, and as those questions were in the hands of the Executive, it was only by joining the Government that I could influence them. 'You and your friends complain,' he said, 'of a secret diplomacy, and that wars are entered into without consulting the people. Now it is in the Cabinet alone that questions of foreign policy are settled. We never consult Parliament till *after* they are settled. If, therefore, you wish to have a voice in those questions, you can only do so in the Cabinet.' This was the argument I found it most difficult to answer, and therefore he pressed it most strongly.

"But finding me still firm in my objections, he observed laughingly, 'Why are you in the House of Commons?' I answered also with a laugh, 'Upon my word I hardly know.' 'But why did you enter public life?' said he. 'I hardly know,' was my answer; 'it was by mere accident, and for a special purpose, and probably it would have been better for me and my family if I had kept my private station.' Upon which he threw out both his hands, and, with a laugh louder than before, he exclaimed, 'Well, but being in it, why not go on?' He added, 'Recollect I don't offer you the seat from any desire of my own to change my colleagues. If left to me, I would of course rather have gone on as before with my old friends. I offer you the seat because you have a right to it.'

"In answer to my remark that perhaps others might be found quite as much entitled as myself to represent the advanced Liberals in his Government, he replied quickly, 'Will you be good enough to mention the name of any one excepting Bright, Gibson, and yourself, that I could bring into the Cabinet as the representative of the Radicals?' I urged that Bright had been unfairly judged, and that his speeches at Birmingham, &c., were not of a kind to exclude

1859. him from an offer of a seat, and I remarked that he had very
Æt. 55. carefully avoided personalities in those speeches. 'It is not personalities that are complained of; a public man,' said he, 'is right in attacking persons. But it is his attacks on *classes* that have given offence to powerful bodies, who can make their resentment felt.'

"In the course of his remarks he gave me a full explanation of his views on the present war, and expressed his determination to preserve a strict neutrality, observing that, as the people of England would as soon think of 'evacuating these islands' as to go to war in behalf of Austria, and as France did not ask us to help her, he could not see any possibility of our being mixed up in the fray. On this point he remarked:—'If you are afraid of our abandoning our neutral ground, why don't you come into the citadel of power, where you could have a voice in preventing it?'

"On his remarking upon the difficulty there would be in carrying on the Government unless all parties were united, and how impossible it was for him to do so if the natural representatives of the Liberals would not take office, I replied that the very fact of his having offered me office was, so far as I was concerned, his justification; and that *I* should be blamed, and not he in the matter. And I added, 'I shall give just the same support to your Government whilst Mr. Gibson is in it, who represents identically my views, as I should if I were one of your Government: for I should be certain to run away, if you were to do anything very contrary to my strong convictions.' I added that at present there were only two subjects on which we could have any serious difference, and that if he kept out of the war, and gave us a fair Reform measure, I did not see any other point on which I should be found opposing him. He returned to the argument that my presence in the Government was the important step required; and I then told him

that having run the gauntlet of my friends in Lancashire, who had kindly pressed the matter on me, and having resolved to act in opposition to their views, which nothing but the strongest convictions of the propriety of my course could have induced me to do, my mind was irrevocably made up. And so I rose to depart, expressing the hope that our personal and political relations might be in future the same as if I were in his Government. 1859. Ær. 55.

"As I left the room he said, 'Lady Palmerston receives to-morrow evening at ten?' To which I instantly replied, 'I shall be happy to be allowed to present myself to her.' 'I shall be very glad if you will,' was his answer, and so we parted.

"The next evening I was at Cambridge House for the first time, and found myself among a crowd of fashionables and politicians, and was the lion of the party. The women came and stared with their glasses at me, and then brought their friends to stare also. As I came away, Jacob Omnium and I were squeezed into a corner together, and he remarked, 'You are the greatest political monster that ever was seen in this house. There never was before seen such a curiosity as a man who refused a Cabinet office from Lord Palmerston, and then came to visit him here. Why, there are not half-a-dozen men in all that crowd that would not jump at the offer, and believe themselves quite as fit as you to be President of the Board of Trade.'

"I never had before so much annoyance to my feelings as in this matter. To be pressed by nearly all my friends to take a course which I felt from the first moment to be impossible, was a most painful ordeal to go through. I don't remember any political occurrence which ever before made me ill. This has really upset my physical health. However, I hope my friends will on reflection do me justice, and believe that I acted conscientiously. Certainly all the

1859. ordinary motives of human nature would have led me to
ÆT. 55. come to quite another conclusion."

This conclusion caused deep chagrin to many, perhaps to most, of those with whom he had been most closely associated. His friends in the north were excited and elated by the circumstance that one of their own number, a middle-class manufacturer, had at length penetrated the sacred enclosure of the oligarchy. In France all the best men were infinitely delighted by the honour that had been paid to one to whom they were accustomed to look up as the champion of progress and political morality. They dreamed that his presence in the Cabinet would be a guarantee for conciliatory ideas in the Government. They were greatly disappointed at the issue. M. Chevalier accepted Cobden's reasons; but he protested against any absolute and systematic resolution on Cobden's part never to take office. "When a man has mixed himself up in public affairs," he said, "with so much superiority and success as you have had, then the public has a certain claim upon him, and the exercise of this claim is the demand that he shall take part in the government of the country."

There was one eminent man, however, who earnestly approved of the step that had been taken. Mr. Bright declared that he had never been more clear of anything than that Cobden looked at the matter in a true light; and he thought that a few months would prove this to be so. We now know that Mr. Bright's sagacity was not at fault. Almost from the first the new Cabinet espoused the policy of suspicion and alarm, and within the few months of which Mr. Bright had spoken, we shall find Cobden writing to Lord Palmerston and Lord John, with a vehemence of protest and conviction which he could under no circumstances have controlled, and which would have made his position in the Government desperate. It is true that to one powerful

member of that Cabinet its military policy, now and after, was as abhorrent as it was to Cobden himself; who wrestled with his conscience by day and by night as to the morality of his position; and who only escaped from his own reprobation by the hope that in a balance of evils he had chosen the course which led to the less of them. If Cobden had been sitting by Mr. Gladstone's side at the council table during the first half of 1860, would they together have been able to resist Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell, supported by the body of the Cabinet, and encouraged by the excited suspicions of the great bulk of the nation? To put the question is to answer it. Lord Palmerston was quite strong enough at that moment to do without Cobden, and even without Mr. Gladstone, if Mr. Gladstone, yielding to a moral pressure which, as we shall see, Cobden unsparingly applied to him when the time came, had refused to remain an accessory, and had left the Government. If Cobden had taken office at Midsummer, he would certainly have been out of it by Christmas.

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Beneath solid considerations of this kind, there was probably an unspoken sense of a loss of personal dignity and self-respect that would follow official subordination to a Minister of whom he had thought and spoken so ill as he had thought and spoken of Lord Palmerston. When Macaulay supposed in the crisis of 1845 that there was a chance of his being invited to take office under Sir Robert Peel, he said: "After the language which I have held respecting Peel, and which I am less than ever disposed to retract, I feel that I cannot without a loss of personal dignity, and without exposing myself to suspicions and insinuations that would be insupportable to me, hold any situation under him."[1] There is always sure to be too little rather than too much of this honourable sensibility in public life. Cobden was perfectly

[1] Trevelyan's *Life*, ii. 163.

1859. justified in disclaiming all personal feeling about Lord
Æт. 55. Palmerston, but his repugnance to the sentiments, traditions, and methods of which Palmerston was the representative, was the deepest part of his nature, and it was ineradicable. The instinct was surely sound which told him that something would be lost to the integrity of his political character and conscience, if he allowed the seeming expediency of the hour to tempt him into an alliance with a system that he had always denounced, and with men who had all their lives been committed to it heart and soul. Other people would in the long run have felt the same thing about him. The moral influence of character is the most delicate of all forces. It is affected by subtle and almost imperceptible agencies, of which logic is far too rough an instrument to take any account. The idea which men had, and still have, of Cobden's simplicity, independence, and conviction, would inevitably have been tarnished if he had accepted a post under one, to whom the beliefs and the language of a lifetime made him the typical antagonist.

This was what was in Cobden's mind when he said, "I have a horror of losing my individuality, which is to me as existence itself." His position in the League had shown that nobody was less open than he to the charge of inability to act with others,—that fatal sign of mediocre capacity. But a more fatal sign of a worse moral mediocrity is the ability to act with the first comer. Cobden was of all men the most staunch and most flexible member of an alliance, but he was scrupulously careful in choosing who his allies should be. He was right in thinking that he should not find one after his own heart either in Lord Palmerston, or among many of the colleagues with whom Palmerston was likely to provide him.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE FRENCH TREATY.

In the summer of 1859 M. Michel Chevalier paid a visit to 1859.
England, which led to one of the most important chapters Ær. 55.
in the life of Cobden, as well as to a very important episode in the relations between England and France. To M. Chevalier, Free Trade was an article of religious conviction. In his early manhood he had been one of that truly remarkable band of men who between 1830 and 1840 devoted themselves to the principles of Saint Simon, to propagating them in every country from the Seine to the Nile, and to carrying them out in their own lives and persons with the fervid enthusiasm of the first followers of Saint Francis. It was they who first succeeded in setting industrial questions before political ones in French opinion; and though their organization split upon the rock of certain theocratic fantasies, the wide social views connected with it remained deeply stamped on their minds. They made a definite impression in France, and prepared the way for the events of 1848. So early as 1832 M. Chevalier had shown the bias of his views by a paper on the Mediterranean system, proposing the construction of railways throughout Europe on a scale which then seemed chimerical enough. In this he dwelt upon the facilities that would be offered for travelling from one country to another, and how these facilities "would speedily break down the barriers of

1859. ancient prejudice, remove hereditary animosities, and
ÆT. 55. firmly cement nation to nation in a lasting peace."[1] The Suez Canal was another favourite idea with these far-seeing men; for one of the most striking things about them was that they united to their mystic enthusiasm, as their lives afterwards proved, practical faculties of the highest and most valuable kind. Free exchange exactly fitted in with their notions of promoting international union by increasing the pacific intercourse of nations.

In the session of 1859 Mr. Bright in a speech in the House of Commons incidentally asked why, instead of lavishing the national substance in armaments, they did not go to the French Emperor and attempt to persuade him to allow his people to trade freely with ours.[2] M. Chevalier, after reading this speech, was inspired by the idea of a Commercial Treaty between England and France, and he wrote to Cobden in this sense. Coming to England shortly afterwards, he found that Cobden had arranged, for family reasons, to pass a portion of the winter in Paris. He immediately saw an opening, and urged Cobden to seize the opportunity for converting the Emperor, as fifteen years earlier he had so powerfully aided in converting the English public, to the policy of Free Trade, and to as near an execution of that policy as the circumstances of a country still in the stage of prohibition could permit.

These ideas made so strong an impression on Cobden that he grew eager to discuss them with the only statesman in the high official world with whom he felt conscious of deep moral and political sympathy. What made the idea

[1] See Mr. A. J. Booth's *Saint Simon and Saint-Simonism* (Longman, 1876), p. 169—an excellent account of an extraordinary movement.

[2] The idea was in the air. In a conversation with Lord John Russell, Count Persigny expressed a wish, as an earnest of the sincerity of the Emperor's desire for peace, for a Commercial Treaty between Great Britain and France, by which France might be enabled to lower her protective duties.—Martin's *Life of the Prince Consort*, iv. 470.

of a Treaty possible, moreover, was that in the following year terminable annuities to the amount of upwards of two millions would fall in, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer would have that amount of taxation to deal with. If the Minister could be induced to entertain the idea of a Treaty, he would by means of such a surplus be able to make that reduction in the duties on French articles which the French would regard, and insist upon, as a price for a transformation of their own prohibitive system. In the early part of September, Cobden paid a visit to Hawarden, and there he opened his mind to Mr. Gladstone. They were both of them thoroughly alive to the objections to which on strictly economic grounds treaties of commerce must always be open. They both felt it to be perfectly true, if economic rules were never under any circumstances to be contravened, that, as Mr. Bright had already said, it was our business to look to our own tariffs, and to release French products from the duties that prevented our trading with France; and this without any stipulation as to what France should do in return. But then they felt that the occasion was one which could not be judged in this simple way. An economic principle by itself, as all sensible men have now learnt, can never be decisive of anything in the mixed and complex sphere of practice. Neither Cobden nor Mr. Gladstone could resist the force of M. Chevalier's emphatic assurance, that in no other way could the French tariff be altered in the direction of Free Trade than through a diplomatic act, that is to say, a commercial treaty with England. The Emperor, moreover, in spite of his absolutist system, was practically powerless to reduce his duties, unless the English Government gave him the help of a corresponding movement on their side.

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Mr. Gladstone discerned both the opportunity which such a movement would afford for continuing the great work of

1859. tariff reform, and the strong influence that a commercial
ÆT. 55. treaty would have upon the violent and dangerous perturbations in the political sentiment of the two nations towards one another. His powerful imagination was kindled, and he had the first dawn of that fine vision which he revealed to the public in the famous budget speech of the following February. He was, in fact, continuing the work which Sir Robert Peel had begun in 1842, along the very lines which Peel had then expressly laid down. In the case of wine and brandy, Sir Robert Peel had said that he did not reduce the duty, because he hoped that they might employ these duties "as instruments of negotiation, with a view of effecting a reduction in the duties imposed by other countries on the produce of our own country." "I am not disposed," Peel said, "to carry too far that principle of withholding from ourselves the benefits of reduction of duties in order to force other nations to act in a reciprocal manner, and in many cases we weakened the effect of instruments we held in our own hands by reducing the duty of articles relative to which negotiations might have been entered into. Our general rule was that in cases where the articles were elements of manufacture, or where there was risk from smuggling, we took to ourselves the advantage likely to arise from a reduction of duty on these articles; but in others, wine for example, we made no reduction of duty, and intend to make no reduction of duty, in the hope that we shall induce other countries to give to us an equivalent advantage."[1] The discussion therefore between Mr. Gladstone and Cobden at Hawarden in 1859 turned upon the means of realizing the hope then expressed by Sir Robert Peel in 1843, and expressed by him not casually, but as an element in a deliberate policy.

Cobden's first suggestion had been that as he was

[1] Feb. 17, 1843.

about to spend a part of the winter in Paris, he might perhaps be of use to Mr. Gladstone in the way of inquiry. Conversation expanded this modest proposal into something more definite and more energetic. It was thought that, if he had the tacit and informal authority of the British Government, he might put himself into communication with the Emperor and his Ministers, might bring to bear upon them his well-tried powers of persuasion and conversion, and might work out with them the scheme of a treaty which would give an occasion for a great fiscal reform in both countries, and in both countries would produce a solid and sterling pacification of feelings. 1859. Æt. 55.

This was the plan with which Cobden quitted Hawarden. He was not confident of success, for he knew that he would have to deal with governments, and he had little faith in either the courage or the disinterestedness of governments. When he started on the expedition, he had written in no sanguine vein to Mr. Bright:—"Governments seem as a rule to be standing conspiracies to rob and bamboozle people, and why should that of Louis Napoleon be an exception? The more I see of the rulers of the world," he added, in amplification of a famous saying, "the less of wisdom or greatness do I find necessary for the government of mankind."

When he reached London he found that the Ministers had been summoned for a Cabinet Council. He called upon Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell, and discussed M. Chevalier's notions with them. "It is not easy," he wrote to Mr. Bright, "to interest men whose foreign policy has been running in such different grooves, in questions of political economy and tariffs. But I spoke frankly to both of them as to the state of our relations with France, and disparaged the value of an alliance in China, or any other pretended *entente cordiale*, whilst we were keeping up

1859. twenty-six millions of armaments, principally as a defence
Æт. 55. against France."

"From what I hear," he continued, "the Cabinet is concerned with the mighty question whether France is to take a bit of territory from Morocco. We are, I suppose, to protest from Gibraltar against anything so shocking to us as picking and stealing our neighbour's territory going on within view of that reputable possession of ours. We have taken a whole empire from a Mahometan sovereign in Asia, and we are horrified at France taking a province in the same latitude from a Mahometan sovereign in Africa. For my part, if France took the whole of Africa, I do not see what harm she would do us or anybody else save herself."[4]

It will one day seem incredible that two keen and patriotic statesmen of the eminence which Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell held in the public esteem, should at this stage of our history have so misconceived the relative importance of things, as to think the very remotest doings of any foreign government a matter of real and primary importance, and an extension of our trade, however vast it might promise to be, a matter so purely secondary as hardly to be worth an hour's serious attention. At a Lord Mayor's dinner, or at a meeting at Manchester, each of them often uttered the stereotyped sentences about commercial prosperity being the basis of British greatness. But neither of them had what religious writers call a living sense of the extent to which such words were true. They were really thinking all the time of strong despatches and spirited representa-

[4] The source of the uneasiness in Downing Street was the dispute between Spain and Morocco, as to the boundaries of the Spanish territory round Ceuta. "It is plain," Lord Palmerston wrote to Lord John Russell, "that France aims through Spain at getting fortified points on each side of the Gut of Gibraltar"—with the ultimate view of "shutting us out of the Mediterranean" (Ashley's *Life*, ii. 374). The inference as to the designs of France is a masterpiece of the perverse ingenuity of the Palmerstonian policy of alarm.

tions. The commercial and industrial movements of our own country, and the relations of government to them, were treated as objects for men of the third or fourth order in the political system. What is curious is, that while devoting such passionate attention to foreign affairs, no men ever seem to take so little pains as ministers of this stamp to keep themselves abundantly and accurately informed of what really goes on in foreign countries, what forces are at work under the trite words of diplomatic agents, what amount of substance throws those shadows about which they write and speak so many busy sentences.

Although, however, he received no cheerful encouragement from either the Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary, Cobden was not forbidden to proceed on the mission that he had volunteered. On October 18, he arrived in Paris, and on the 23rd he went to see Lord Cowley at Chantilly. They had a long conversation, in the course of which the English Ambassador gave the Emperor a high character for straightforwardness, and a strict adherence to his word in all his engagements with Lord Cowley himself. Two days later Cobden, M. Chevalier, and M. Rouher dined together. The Minister had been very uneasy lest the fact of his interview with Cobden should get abroad, and I have heard that the dinner was planned with as much secrecy and discretion as if they had been three housebreakers under the surveillance of the police.

M. Rouher, who was then Minister of Commerce, professed strong Free-trade views, and was thoroughly won round by Cobden's exposition of the well-known list of Protectionist subterfuges. He made no secret that it was the Emperor only who on every question gave the initiative to his Minister. If he could be induced to reform his customs duties, M. Rouher would be a very willing instrument in promoting his plans. The next step, and the

1859. greatest, was to convince the Emperor. The Minister
ÆT. 55. undertook to procure an invitation, and two days later (October 27) Cobden went to St. Cloud to have his first audience. It was not the first time that they had seen one another. Cobden had met Louis Napoleon at breakfast at Mr. Monckton Milnes's three days after the escape from Ham in 1846. He had then set the Prince down for a very mediocre person indeed. He did his best to remember that he was now talking to quite a different personage, but was not sure that he always succeeded. Cobden kept a full journal of the events of the negotiation, and the following is his account of the first interview with the convert who was of paramount importance :—

"After a few remarks upon the subject of the improvements in Paris, and in the Bois de Boulogne, and after he had expressed his regret at my not having entered the Ministry of Lord Palmerston, the Emperor alluded to the state of feeling in England, and expressed his regret that notwithstanding he had for ten years given every possible proof of his desire to preserve the friendship of the British people, the press had at last defeated his purpose, and now the relations of the two countries seemed to be worse than ever. He appealed to me if he had ever done one act to justify the manner in which he was assailed by our press? I candidly told him that I thought the Governments of both countries were to blame. He asked what he could do more than he had already done to promote the friendly relations of the two countries.[1] This led to the question of

[1] In the letter which he wrote on the occasion to Lord Palmerston (Oct. 29, 1859) Cobden gave a rather fuller account of this preliminary part of the conversation:—"The Emperor began the conversation after a few introductory remarks, by complaining of the English Press. I told him that I had myself been accused of every crime almost by the Press (including an attempt at murder), and that I had learnt to laugh at it. He continued this topic by asking me to point out a single act during the ten years he had been in power, which had not been dictated by a desire to

Free Trade, and I urged many arguments in favour of removing those obstacles which prevented the two countries from being brought into closer dependence on one another. He expressed himself as friendly to this policy, but alluded to the great difficulties in his way; said he had made an effort by admitting iron in bond for ship-building, which he was obliged to alter again, and spoke of the sliding scale on corn which had been re-imposed after it had expired. I spoke of the opportuneness of the present moment for making a simultaneous change in the English and French tariffs, as there was a prospect of a surplus of revenue next year, owing to the expiry of our terminable annuities, and that Mr. Gladstone was very desirous to make this surplus available for reducing duties on French commodities. Louis Napoleon said he had a majority of his Chambers quite opposed to Free Trade, and that they would not pass a

stand well with England, and to keep the two countries in a state of harmony and friendship; but the Press had completely defeated his object. After reminding him that I had blamed, both in Parliament and in public meetings, the attacks made in England on the Government of France, I said that he should bear in mind that his name, which had such a charm in the cottages of France, had still a sound which carried a traditional alarm into our houses, and that this feeling was worked upon by those who for their own ends persuaded the people that he intended to repeat the career of his uncle. With some excuses, I ventured to add that the way in which he had entered on the war in Italy, without a previous *exposé des motifs*, had given great force to their persuasion. He interrupted me by saying that he had explained his reasons. I told him that what I meant was that he had not appealed to the world with a manifesto of his grievances and objects, and that if he had done so, from what I knew of the opinion in England and America, where the Austrian Government had hardly a friend, the feeling would have been so universally in his favour that a war would not have been necessary. But the suddenness and secrecy with which this great war was entered upon alarmed people lest the same thing should be repeated. After some further conversation about the state of feeling, which I admitted was very bad, if not perilous, in England, and which he said was brought to such a state in France that he seemed to be almost the only man friendly to England left, I expressed an opinion, very frankly, that the Governments of both countries, professing as they did to be friendly, would be responsible, if not blamable, were nothing done to try to put an end to this state of things."

1859. ÆT. 55. decided measure; that by the constitution he could alter the tariff by a decree, if it were part of a treaty with a foreign power; and he asked me whether England would enter into a commercial treaty with him. I explained that we could give no exclusive privileges to any nation; that we could simultaneously make reductions in our tariffs; and the alterations might be inserted in a treaty, but that our tariff must be equally applicable to all countries. He said he was under a pledge not to abolish the prohibitive system in France and substitute moderate duties, previous to 1861. I told him that I saw no obstacle in this to a treaty being entered into next spring, for that the moral effect would be the same even if the full operation of the new duties did not come into play for two or three years. He asked me to let him know what reductions could be made in our tariff upon articles affecting his country, which I promised to do. He then inquired what I should advise him to do in regard to the French tariff. I said I should attack one article of great and universal necessity, as I had done in England, when I confined all my efforts to the abolition of the corn-laws, knowing that when that *clef-de-voûte* was removed, the whole system would fall. In France, the great primary want was cheap iron, which is the daily bread of all industries, and I should begin by abolishing the duty on iron and coal, and then I should be in a better position for approaching all the other industries; that I would, if necessary, pay an indemnity in some shape to the iron-masters, and thus be enabled to abolish their protection immediately—a course which I should not contemplate following with any other commodity but iron and coal. He spoke of the danger of throwing men out of work, and I tried by a variety of arguments to convince him, especially by a reference to the example of England, that the effect of a reduction of duties is to increase, not diminish, the demand for labour.

I showed that in England we had much machinery standing 1859.
idle in consequence of the want of workmen at the present Æt. 55.
time; and in order to allay his fears of an inundation of British products, to throw his own people out of work, I explained that there was not an ounce of our productions which was not already bespoken, and that it would take a long time to increase largely our investment of capital, whilst it was impossible to procure any considerable addition to our labourers. On my giving him a description of the reforms effected by Sir Robert Peel, and the great reverence in which his name is held, he said, 'I am charmed and flattered at the idea of performing a similar work in my country; but,' he added, 'it is very difficult in France to make reforms; we make revolutions in France, not reforms.'

"The Emperor is short in stature and very undignified; I never saw a person with fewer heroic traits in his appearance and manner. But there is nothing harsh or even cold in the expression of his countenance. His eye is not pleasant at first, but it warms and moistens with conversation, and gives you the impression that he is capable of generous emotions.

"The approach to the Palace of Saint Cloud was thronged with military, both horse and foot. I entered the building, and passed through an avenue of liveried lacqueys in the hall, from which I ascended the grand staircase, guarded at the top by sentries, and I passed through a series of apartments hung with gorgeous tapestry, each room being in charge of servants higher in rank as they come nearer to the person of the Sovereign. As I surveyed this gorgeous spectacle, I found my thoughts busy with the recollection of a very different scene which I had looked upon a few months before at Washington, when I was the guest of the President of the United States, a plain man in a black suit,

1859. living in comparative simplicity, without a sentry at his
ÆT. 55. door or a livery servant in his house."

In writing of this important interview to Mr. Bright, Cobden says (Nov. 17, 1859):—

"I had a full hour's private talk at St. Cloud with Louis Napoleon. He knew I had taken the unpopular line in opposing the invasion cry. He is not unmindful of such acts of fairness, and I felt myself not only tolerated but encouraged to talk, with just as much frankness as I could to you or any other equal. In reply to his strong complaints against the English press, I told him that the course he had taken in beginning the Italian war suddenly, and without publishing a manifesto of his grievances to the world, had alarmed the public mind of Europe; that not only England but Germany was arming to the teeth; and that this was all in reference to himself, and from the fear that he contemplated repeating the career of his uncle. I told him that there was but one way of removing this impression, and that was by a bold measure of commercial reform; that there was only a choice between the policy of Napoleon I. and the policy of Sir Robert Peel. On this point, I used every argument, to make it appear that it was his interest to begin the work at once; quoted the complete success of our experiment; and pointed to the fame of Sir Robert Peel, and the veneration in which his memory was held, as stimulants for his honourable ambition. I found his sympathies strongly with us, but he is ignorant of practical details, and he has consequently a great dread of the protectionists. You may be sure I spared no pains to take the latter gentry down in his estimation. I never had a better private pupil. He is a good listener, and put some very pertinent questions. The most remarkable fact respecting this man is, that, whilst the press and the popular sentiment attribute to him the most tortuous and deceptive policy, *all* who

have business with him, without exception, give him the character of straightforwardness and fairness. This is the testimony of Malmesbury, Lord John, and Lord Palmerston, and of Lord Cowley to a very high degree indeed. Then, turning to Kossuth, who had the cup dashed suddenly from his lips, by the almost unaccountable turn in the affairs of the war at Villafranca, *he* distinctly told me that Louis Napoleon did not in the slightest degree deceive or betray *him*. I travelled from Paris to London last week with Klapka, who was at the headquarters of the war, and he repeated the sentiments expressed by Kossuth. Klapka thinks Louis Napoleon has genuine popular sympathies, and wound up his remarks on him with the words, 'Il n'est pas méchant.'" 1859. Ær. 55.

The Emperor afterwards expressed himself to M. Fould as highly satisfied with the interview. Cobden, he said, had given him a little courage. In describing this interview to Lord Palmerston, Cobden expressed a strong opinion that the Emperor was more afraid than he need have been, of the protected interests. "I have no doubt that as you say," Lord Palmerston wrote in reply, "the Emperor and his advisers greatly exaggerate the resisting power of the protectionist classes. But the want of moral courage in Frenchmen which you advert to, is confessed even by Frenchmen themselves, and it is probably one cause of the frequency of political convulsions in France." Napoleon was open to the impressions of political fervour. Cobden produced upon his mind the same reinspiriting effect which had followed in relation to his Italian policy from the memorable interview with Cavour in the previous spring.

M. Fould was the person next to be converted, and Cobden succeeded in persuading him that instead of the timid course of replacing a policy of prohibition by a policy of extensive protection, the Government would do better boldly to embrace a large reform. The protectionists, he

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very truly said, would offer as much opposition to a timid as to a bold scheme, while for a small reform there would be no vigorous popular sympathy or support. They went over again the whole question of Free Trade, M. Fould using many of the old fallacies about being inundated by British goods, labourers being thrown out of work, and so forth. "I had," says Cobden, "to give him the first lessons in political economy."

A day or two afterwards he received from the Emperor an invitation for himself and his wife to spend four days at Compiègne. He declined it on the plea of Mrs. Cobden's health. M. Chevalier was very anxious that he should go, and Cobden wrote to Mr. Bright that he was sorely tempted to accept the invitation, because it would have given him a good opportunity of talking to the Emperor unreservedly, and without the risk of his audiences being reported. It was the Emperor's custom to walk about with his guests, and chat with them over his interminable cigarettes. "If I had been sure," Cobden says, "of converting my pupil into a practical Free-trader, I would have gone. But if I failed, the fact of my having taken part in those gay festivities would have furnished a ready taunt of my having been bought and seduced, if I had ever said a word against a French invasion afterwards. So it is better as it is."[1]

Ten days were passed in discussions with M. Fould, and conversations with M. Chevalier. There were many vacillations, and each day brought its new rumour, for hope or discouragement. Cobden's record of some of his interviews with the Minister is worth reproducing, because they show the mind of the French Government in listening to his arguments, and they show also how entirely the French Ministers depended on him for inspiration and guidance in their new policy.

[1] *To J. Bright, Nov. 20, 1859.*

Nov. 2.—"M. Fould called; he seemed preoccupied with the uneasy and hostile state of feeling in England against France. He regretted that there was no way in which a statesman in France could make a public statement in reply to the speeches delivered at the late Conservative banquet at Liverpool; said something must be done to allay the uneasiness in the financial and commercial world; and at all events, was glad that the French and English Governments had come to an understanding respecting the joint expedition against China.[7] The officers sent to England to arrange this combination of forces had, he said, completed their plans satisfactorily in conjunction with the British authorities. This warlike alliance has been strenuously sought for lately by the French Government under the impression, as I believe, that it would tend to promote a more amicable state of feeling between the two countries. I told him I had great doubts whether this expectation would be realized; that the war against China would not be popular in England; and the motives of each party in going into the alliance would be certain to be misinterpreted by the other. 'Yes,' he replied, 'I suppose it will be said to be a snare on our part.' He then repeated the words, 'Something must be done,' and he recurred at last, apparently with no great relish, to the subject of a Commercial Treaty with England.

"He saw great difficulties in the way. How, when, and where could a negotiation be carried on, and with whom? He was afraid that if a meeting between himself, the Minister of Commerce, M. Rouher, and myself, were to take place, it could not be kept a secret; that at present they

[7] By the Treaty of 1858 the European signatories had the right of sending ambassadors to Pekin. In June, 1859, the English fleet conveying the envoy was resisted at the mouth of the Pei-Ho. Without giving the Chinese an opportunity of making reparation, the English and French Government proceeded to organize a joint expedition. It was in the course of this (Oct. 6, 1860) that the European troops committed the infamy of pillaging and burning the Summer Palace.

1859. ÆT. 55. had concealed even from M. Walewski, the Foreign Minister, the fact of any conversation having taken place between the Emperor, and themselves, and me. I spoke of Prince Napoleon, whom M. Fould described as quite a sincere opponent of Protection, but he added that he was very apt to talk too freely, and that we must be careful how we took him into our counsels. I told him that, as regarded the negotiations, I was prepared to go into the preliminary discussion of the changes which should be made in the tariffs of the two countries; that I could in a short interview or two with him and M. Rouher, give them a general idea as to what I thought ought to be done by both parties, and that if necessary I thought I could obtain Lord Palmerston's authority for acting in the matter. He had no objection to make to this. He said he was to dine with the Emperor to-morrow; and all I could gather was that he seemed to be in a very timid and undecided state of mind.

"Before parting, I alluded to the state of uneasiness, not only in England but on the Continent, and reminded him of the great increase of warlike preparation which had been going on; and I expressed an opinion that a Bonaparte being on the throne of France, who had last spring invaded Italy and fought great battles, was the cause of the present feeling of mistrust, and that to this fact alone was to be attributed an augmentation of the expenditure for defensive armaments in Europe at this moment to the amount of twenty millions sterling per annum. He said that nothing was farther from the Emperor's thoughts than to pursue a warlike policy. I remarked, as he was leaving the room, that, so far as I was acquainted with the state of public opinion in England, nothing would so instantaneously convince the people there of the Emperor's pacific intentions, as his entering boldly upon a policy of commercial reform, by which he would enable those, who, like myself, took the unpopular side in

opposing the current of prejudice and hatred which was running against him in England, to turn the tables on his accusers and detractors. Afterwards I called on Lord Cowley, and explained what had passed. He was going to dine to-day with M. Fould. The droll part of these interviews, besides the timidity of the people, is that here is a government having so little faith or confidence in one another, that some of its members tie me down, a perfect stranger, to secrecy as against their most elevated colleagues!"

The next day Cobden started for London, where he remained for a week, partly engaged in some private business connected with the Illinois Railway. He saw Mr. Gladstone, who entered as heartily as before into the matter. "Gladstone," he said in a letter to his trusted friend at Rochdale, "is really almost the only Cabinet Minister of five years' standing who is not afraid to let his heart guide his head a little at times." He tried to see the Foreign Secretary, but failed. "I doubt," he says, "whether Lord John is not just now attaching more value to the spirited turn of a phrase about Morocco, than to my efforts to lay down a commercial cable that shall bind these two great countries together." He called on Lord Palmerston, and had a conversation on the state of public feeling in France and England. Lord Palmerston admitted that the Government of this country had no complaint against the Emperor, and no reason to be dissatisfied with his conduct, and that there was no unsettled question or ground of quarrel between the two countries. But one man had told him of a French order for ten thousand tons of iron plating for ships of war, and another man had told him of a large order for rifled cannons, and a third had talked of some flat-bottomed boats at Nantes. All these tendencies to increase his means of aggression in case of a desire to attack England, made it necessary, said Lord Palmerston, to increase our means of defence. Would it not

1859. ÆT. 55. be wiser—this is Cobden's reflection on Lord Palmerston's plea,—"to act as private individuals would do in such a case, namely, ask an explanation of the meaning of such apparently unfriendly proceedings, and offer frankly to explain any acts in return, which might have a hostile complexion. But governments are opposed to a simplification of their proceedings, or to bringing them under those rules of common sense which control the acts of every-day individual life."

On his way back to France, M. de Persigny, the French ambassador, came over from Hastings to Newhaven to discuss with him the prospects of commercial reform in France. Cobden thought highly of Persigny, spoke of him as "an honest and warm-hearted" creature, and recognized, as some of the bitterest enemies of the group who helped Louis Napoleon to the throne have always recognized, that Persigny's devotion to the Emperor would have stood the test of adverse fortune. However this may be, there can be no doubt of the French ambassador's zeal and sincerity on behalf of the new cause.

On the 17th of November, Cobden returned to Paris, so ill that he at once took to his bed, and was confined to his room for some days. Illness, however, did not quench his zeal, and he carried on the endless argument with the Ministers in his bedroom. It is not necessary to recount the course of negotiations from day to day, nor the busy and laborious discussions with M. Fould and M. Rouher. On December 9th, M. Chevalier informed Cobden that M. Rouher had prepared his plan for a commercial treaty, which would be submitted for the Emperor's approval on the next day. "There is but one man in the Government," M. Rouher had said, "the Emperor, and but one will, that of the Emperor." The will of this one man still remained uncertain. Lord

Cowley who had been staying at Compiègne three weeks 1859.
before, said the Emperor was strong for a commercial ÆT. 55.
treaty with England, but since then his language had changed. He had once more found out how many difficulties were to be overcome. It had become, as he told Lord Cowley, "*une grosse affaire.*" The Emperor had been pressing M. Fould as to the precise advantage that France would gain in imitating the policy of England. England, said the Emperor, was so dependent on her foreign trade, that she was constantly in a state of alarm at the prospect of war. France, on the other hand, could find herself involved in war with comparatively little inconvenience. "This remark," says Cobden, to whom it was reported, "struck me as disclosing a secret instinct for a policy of war and isolation."

"Lord Cowley," he says in another place, "who knows the Emperor so well, smiled at the idea which so generally prevails of his being always actuated by some clever Machiavellian scheme, when he is often only committing indiscretions from too much simplicity, and want of statesmanlike forethought. He repeated the opinion which he had expressed before, that '*it is not in him*' to have any great plan for a political combination, extending into the future, and embracing all Europe."

Better ideas prevailed at last. M. de Persigny had come over from London, to tell his master how hostile and dangerous was the state of opinion in England. For the first time in his experience, he said, he believed war to be possible, unless the Emperor took some step to remove the profound mistrust that agitated the English public. The security of the throne, he went on to urge, depended on the English alliance being a reality. So long as there was a solid friendship between England and France, they need not care what might be in the mind of Russia, Austria, or

1859. Prussia. This was the course of reasoning which, in Cobden's
ÆT. 55. opinion, finally decided the Emperor. In other words, Napoleon assented to the Treaty, less because it was good for the French than because it would pacify the English. It was the only available instrument for keeping the English alliance.

M. Rouher presented his plan of a commercial treaty, together with sixty pages of illustrative reasoning upon it. The whole was read to the Emperor; he listened attentively through every page, approved it, and declared his intention of carrying it out. He then produced a letter which he had prepared, addressed to M. Fould, and intended for publication, in which he announced his determination to enter upon a course of pacific improvement, to promote the industry of the country by cheapening transport, and so forth.

The project was now disclosed to Count Walewski, the Minister for foreign affairs, and Cobden was invited to have an interview with him. Once more he went over the ground along which he had already led Fould, Rouher, and the Emperor. "I endeavoured," says Cobden, "to remove his doubts and difficulties, and to fortify his courage against the protectionist party, whose insignificance and powerlessness I demonstrated by comparing their small body with the immense population which was interested in the removal of commercial restrictions." The discussion with M. Walewski was followed by a second interview with the Emperor.

Dec. 21.—"Had an interview with the Emperor at the Tuileries. I explained to him that Mr. Gladstone, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was anxious to prepare his Budget for the ensuing session of Parliament, and that it would be a convenience to him to be informed as soon as possible whether the French Government was decided to agree to a commercial treaty, as in that case he would make

arrangements accordingly; that he did not wish to be in possession of the details, but merely to know whether the principle of a treaty was determined upon. The Emperor said he could have no hesitation in satisfying me on that point; that he had quite made up his mind to enter into the Treaty, and that the only question was as to the details. He spoke of the difficulties he had to overcome, owing to the powerful interests that were united in defence of the present system. 'The protected industries combine, but the general public do not.' I urged many arguments to encourage him to take a bold course, pointing out the very small number of the protected classes as compared with the whole community, and contending for the interests of the greatest number, rather than for those of the minority. He repeated to me the arguments which had been used by some of his ministers to dissuade him from a Free-trade policy, particularly by M. Magne, his Finance Minister, who had urged that if he merely changed his system from prohibition to high protective duties, it would be a change only in name, but that if he laid on moderate duties which admitted a large importation of foreign merchandise, then, for every piece of manufactured goods so admitted to consumption in France, a piece of domestic manufacture must be displaced. I pointed out the fallacy of M. Magne's argument in the assumption that everybody in France was sufficiently clothed, and that no increased consumption could take place. I observed that many millions in France never wore stockings, and yet stockings were prohibited. He remarked that he was sorry to say that ten millions of the population hardly ever tasted bread, but subsisted on potatoes, chestnuts, &c.—(I conclude this must be an exaggeration). I expressed an opinion that the working population of his country were in a very inferior condition as compared with those in England.

1859. ÆT. 55. "Referring to the details in his intended tariff, he said the duties would range from ten to thirty per cent. I pointed out the excessive rate of the latter figure, that the maximum ought not to exceed twenty per cent.; that it would defeat his object in every way if he went as high as thirty per cent.; that it would fail as an economical measure, whilst in a political point of view it would be unsuccessful, inasmuch as the people of England would regard it as prohibition in another form. He referred me to M. Rouher for further discussion of this question. He described to me the letter which he thought of publishing declaratory of his intention of entering on a course of internal improvement and commercial reform, and asked me whether it would not place him at a disadvantage with the British Government if he announced his policy beforehand, and whether they might not be inclined afterwards to withdraw from the Treaty. I replied that there might be other objections to his publishing such a letter, but this was not one, and that I was sure it would not be taken advantage of by our Government. We then talked of our immense preparation in naval armaments. I said I expected that in a few months we should have sixty line-of-battle ships, screws, in commission. He said he had only twenty-seven. Talking of the excited state of alarm in England, he said he was dictating to M. Mocquard a dialogue between a Frenchman and an Englishman, in which he should introduce all the arguments used in England to stimulate the present alarm of French aggression, and his answers to them, and he asked if I thought the *Times* would print it.

"Whilst we were in the midst of this familiar conversation, during which he smoked several cigarettes, the Empress entered the room, to whom I was introduced. She is a tall and graceful person, very amiable and gracious, but her features were not entirely free from

an expression of thoughtfulness, if not melancholy. The Emperor is said by everybody to be very fascinating to those who come much in personal contact with him. I found him more attractive at this second audience than the first. His manner is very simple and natural. If there be any affectation, it is in a slight air of humility ('young ambition's ladder'), which shows itself with consummate tact in his voice and gestures."

Cobden gives some further particulars in a letter to Mr. Bright (Dec. 29, 1859):—

"I saw the Emperor again for a full hour last week, as you would learn from your brother. Of course, I tried to employ every minute on my own topic, but he was in a talkative mood, and sometimes ran off on other subjects. It was at four o'clock; he had been busy all day, and I was surprised at the gaiety of his manner. He smoked cigarettes all the time, but talked and listened admirably. . . . On this occasion my private lesson was chiefly taken up with answering the arguments with which M. Magne, his Minister of Finance, who is a furious protectionist, had been trying to frighten him. Here was one of them, which he repeated word for word to me: 'Sire, if you do not make a sensible reduction in your duties, the measure will be charged on you as an attempted delusion. If you do make a serious reduction, then for every piece of foreign manufacture admitted into France, you will displace a piece of domestic fabrication.' I of course laughed, and held up both hands, and exclaimed what an old friend that argument was; how we had been told the same thing a thousand times of corn; and how we answered it a thousand times by showing that a fourth part of the people were not properly fed. And then I showed how we had imported many millions of quarters of corn annually since the repeal of our corn law, whilst our own agriculture was more prosperous

1859. and productive than ever, and yet it *was all consumed.* I
ÆT. 55. told him that his people were badly clothed, that nearly a fourth of his subjects did not wear stockings, and I begged him to remind M. Magne that if a few thousand dozens of hose were admitted into France, they might be consumed by these barelegged people, without interfering with the demand for the native manufacture. . . . . We then got upon the condition of the mass of the working people, where his sympathy is mainly centred, and on the effect of machinery, Free Trade, etc., on their fate. He said the protectionists always argued that the working class engaged in manufactures were better off here than in England, and they always assumed that Free Trade would lower the condition of the French operatives. I told him that the operatives in France were working *twenty per cent. more time* for *twenty per cent. less wages*, and *paid upwards of ten per cent. more for their clothing*, as compared with the same class in England. He seized a pen and asked me to repeat these figures, which he put down, observing, 'What an answer to those people!' I told him that if M. Magne or anybody else disputed my figures, I was prepared to prove them. But I need not repeat to you a course of argument with which we are so familiar."

After this interview the negotiation reached the stage of formal diplomacy. Cobden's position had hitherto been wholly unofficial. He had been a private person, representing to the French Emperor that he believed the English Government would not be indisposed to entertain the question of a commercial treaty. The matter came officially before Lord Cowley in the form of a request from Count Walewski that he would ascertain the views and intentions of his Government. Lord Cowley applied to Lord John Russell for official instructions to act, and in the course of the next month Cobden received his own instructions and

powers. Meanwhile not a day was lost, and he brought the same tact and unwearied energy to the settlement of the details of the Treaty, which he had employed in persuading this little group of important men to accept its principles and policy. There was one singular personage, who ought from his keen faculties, his grasp of the principles of modern progress, and his position, to have been the most important of all, but in whom his gifts have been nullified by want of that indescribable something which men call character and the spirit of conduct. This was Prince Napoleon. Cobden had several conversations with him, and came to the conclusion that few men in France had a more thorough mastery of economic questions. He thus describes their first interview, which is interesting from the clearness with which it brings out how secondary or indirect an object the commercial treaty was in itself to the French Government, compared with its importance in their eyes as a means of strengthening the alliance between France and England:—

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ÆT. 56.

"*Jan.* 4.—Dined at M. Emile de Girardin's, and met Prince Napoleon, the son of Jerome, whose face bears a strong resemblance to the first Napoleon. After dinner I conversed apart with him for nearly an hour upon the subject of the proposed Treaty, to which he was strongly favourable. He verified the opinion I had heard of him as being favourable to Free Trade, and he spoke with much fluency and considerable knowledge on economical questions. He gives one the impression of great cleverness in a first interview. In the course of our conversation, in speaking of the relations between France and England, he said that he knew, from frequent conversations with the Emperor, that he desired, *du fond de son cœur*, to be at peace with England, and that he was led to this feeling by the perusal of the life of his uncle, whose fall was attributable to the hostility of England, whose wealth furnished the sinews of war to the

1860. whole of Europe. I went over the whole of the arguments,
ÆT. 56. political and economical, in favour of the Treaty; and he finally proposed to see the Emperor on the subject to-morrow.

"He informed me that M. Walewski had retired from the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs.[a] This led to a long conversation upon the foreign policy of France. The Prince said that as there was to be no congress on Italian affairs, the only way in which they could be arranged was by a thorough alliance between France, England, and Sardinia, by whom the Italian territory must be held inviolate against foreign intervention, and that England must be prepared, in case Austria should violate this rule, to send a fleet into the Adriatic to co-operate with France against that Power. I told him that such an alliance with the present state of public opinion in England so hostile to, or so fearful of, the designs of the Emperor, was out of the question; that the only way to alter this state of doubt and suspicion was a declaration of views by the French Government favourable to a greater commercial intercourse between the two countries; that *letters* or *phrases* would have no effect; that acts alone, as displayed in a reform of the tariff, would inspire the English people with confidence in the pacific intentions of the Emperor. The Prince professed a perfect agreement, repeating my words that there had been enough and too many *phrases* and *letters*. He said that he feared the Emperor might not be firm in the affair of the Treaty; that he would be deterred from his purpose by reports which M. Billault, the Minister of the Interior, would give him of the hostile feelings of the protectionists, and their workpeople at Rouen, Lille, etc.; that he had twice abandoned his purpose, and thrown over M. Rouher, whom he had previously

[a] Walewski's retirement was due to his disagreement with the Emperor on the subject of an Italian Confederation. He was succeeded by M. Thouvenel.

encouraged to proceed with the reform of the tariff; that the Emperor, though he persists in arriving at an object which he has once resolved to attain, yet had a habit of deviating and stumbling by the way."

There were frequent interruptions, for, as Lord Palmerston once said, Napoleon's mind was as full of schemes as a warren is full of rabbits. Cobden was alarmed one day, for instance, by a story that the treaty of commerce was to be thrown aside in favour of a treaty of alliance for settling the affairs of Italy. Then the treaty of commerce was not to be thrown aside, but a political treaty was to be tacked on to it. "It is possible," Cobden wrote to Mr. Gladstone (Jan. 7, 1860), "that the Emperor may think *we* attach so much importance to the Treaty, that he can make it a bribe to make us agree to something else. Much as I am interested in the success of the good work, I would not allow such a stipulation to be made. The Emperor has more necessity for our alliance than we have for his just now." When this disquieting project vanished, the Emperor wished to submit the draft of the Treaty to the Legislative Body, notwithstanding the fact that he had himself assured Cobden that the Legislative Body was irreconcilably hostile to every manner of Free Trade.

After this there was one more fierce struggle at the council-table. M. Magne—a cannon-ball protectionist, as Cobden described him—and M. Troplong, insisted that at any rate the Emperor was bound by his word of honour to have an inquiry before he abolished the prohibitive system. The Emperor yielded, and held a formal inquiry, which was limited to two days. Meanwhile, to show that he had no intention of drawing back, he sent to the *Moniteur*, what was for nine days a memorable document, the Letter to M. Fould. This letter was an announcement, in shadowy general terms, of the coming change; it had previously

1860. been submitted by the Emperor to Cobden, and at Cobden's
ÆT. 56. suggestion some changes and additions had been made in it. Yet, though Cobden thus was not only the inspirer of the Treaty, but actually put words and principles into the Emperor's mouth, one of the favourite charges against the Treaty, when it came before Parliament in England, was that it was the result of a policy of subservience. With noble indignation one member of the House of Commons asked whether the free Parliament of Britain had assembled only to register the decrees of a foreign despot.

In France the Emperor's letter excited intense excitement. An eminent member of the English Parliament happened to be at the house of M. Thiers on the evening when the news of the Treaty was brought in, and he has described the sparkling fury of the great man at the Emperor's new card. The protectionists hastened to Paris and appointed a strong committee to sit *en permanence*. The feeling was so violent that the greatest industrial personage in France told Cobden that his own nephew had refused to shake hands because he, the uncle, was a free trader. The Orleanists were disgusted that the Emperor should have the credit of doing a good thing, and Cobden heard one of the party declare, with much vehemence, at a dinner of the Political Economy Club, that to establish Free Trade in a country where public opinion was not ripe for it, was neither more nor less than gross oppression. Friends and foes, however, amid the hubbub of criticism, agreed in admiring the Emperor's courage. "You may form some idea of the position," Cobden wrote to Mr. Gladstone, "if you will imagine yourself in England in 1820, before Mr. Huskisson began his innovations in our tariff, with this serious disadvantage on the side of the French Government, that while the protectionists have all the selfishness and timidity which characterized our 'interests' at that time, they arrogate to themselves an

amount of social and political importance which our manufacturers never pretended to possess. . . . It would hardly be possible to assemble five hundred persons together by any process of selection, and not find nine-tenths of them at least in favour of the present restrictive system." Only thirteen years before, as we have seen, Louis Philippe had candidly told Cobden that the ironmasters and other protected interests commanded such an overwhelming majority in the Chamber, that it was utterly impossible to take a single step in the direction of Free Trade. Cobden had been warned from the first that the iron interest had powerful friends even within the walls of the imperial palace, and he felt this occult antagonism throughout the negotiation.

The resistance to the Treaty grew stronger every hour. A hundred and twenty cotton-spinners assembled in the courtyard of the Minister of the Interior, tumultuously crying for an immediate interview. M. Thiers was said to be calling for an audience with the Emperor. The press teemed with articles and pamphlets, whose logic and temper betrayed the high pressure under which they had been composed. In Manchester, meanwhile, the Emperor's letter had created an exultant excitement which had never been equalled since the day when Sir Robert Peel announced that he was about to repeal the Corn Laws. The letter had appeared on a Sunday (January 15th), and at the great market which used to draw men from every part of that thriving district on Tuesdays, the French Emperor was everywhere hailed as the best man in Europe. This intense satisfaction was due less to a desire for extended trade, than to the confidence that the Emperor intended peace, and had taken the most effectual means to make it permanent. The English newspapers, which every morning for months past had been accusing the Emperor of every sinister quality in statesmanship, now turned round so handsomely that M. Baroche told

1860. Cobden he wished they could be forced to moderate their
ÆT. 56. compliments, as such flattery made the Treaty more unpopular in France.

A week after the publication of the letter, the Treaty was ready for execution, and the happy day arrived. The following is Cobden's entry in his journal:—

"*Jan.* 23.—Went to the Embassy at eight this morning, to revise for the last time the list of articles in the Treaty. At two o'clock the plenipotentiaries met at the Foreign Office, where the Treaty was read over by a clerk in French and English, after which it was duly signed and sealed.* It is wanting four days only of three months since I had my first interview with the Emperor at St. Cloud. The interval has been a period of almost incessant nervous irritation and excitement, owing to the delays and uncertainties which have constantly arisen. I can now understand not only the wisdom, but the benevolence, of Talleyrand, when he counselled a young diplomatist *not to be in earnest.* However, the work is at last at an end, and I hope it will pave the way for a change in the relations between these two great neighbours by placing England and France in mutual commercial dependence on each other."

Cobden's health had been so bad since his return to Paris in the middle of November, that the end of his business came none too soon. His throat and chest gave him incessant trouble, and the doctor urged a speedy flight to the lands of the sun. Lord Palmerston had written to him that "the climate of Paris is perhaps better than that of London, but then the French physicians are less in the habit of curing their patients than ours are." From climate and physicians alike Cobden was eager to escape. As it happened, the work was not even yet quite at an

* Lord Cowley and Cobden signed on behalf of England, and M. Baroche —then Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs—and M. Rouher for France.

end. Some small verbal loosenesses were discovered in the Treaty. The negotiators had written English coke and coal, when they meant British, and harbour, when they meant shipping. It was re-written, and again signed, the signatures and seals from the old Treaty having been duly cut off. This was on January 29. 1860. — Æt. 56.

Surprise has often been expressed that a man of Cobden's strong Liberalism should have been not only so willing to co-operate with Louis Napoleon, but so unable to enter into the feelings of Frenchmen towards a government which, besides being lawless and violent in its origin, persisted in stifling the press, corrupting the administration, silencing the popular voice, and from time to time sending great batches of untried and often innocent men to obscure and miserable death at Cayenne. A story is told of an Englishman of reputation at this time saying to a group which surrounded him in a Parisian drawing-room:—"But surely under your present Government France is prosperous; and surely you can do as you please." "Oh, dear, yes," said a bystander, "if we wish only to eat, drink, and make money, we can do exactly as we please." It was said that Cobden thought too lightly of all those things, besides eating, drinking, and making money, which the best Frenchman might wish to do and ought to be esteemed and praised for wishing to do. One or two remarks may be made upon this interesting point.

In the first place, economists have often been apt to treat the political side of affairs as secondary to the material side. Turgot, and the whole school of which he is the greatest name, systematically assumed that the reforms which they sought should proceed from an absolute central power. It was one of the distinctions of the Saint Simonians, to whom Cobden's friend Chevalier belonged, that they held strongly that government is good for something, and that authority is

1860. Æt. 56. an indispensable principle of modern societies. M. Laffitte, the admirable chief of another earnest sect of social reformers, told an English traveller that he and his friends approved of the imperial regime. Cobden's attitude, therefore, was in harmony with that of many able and disinterested men who had nothing to do with the imperialist party, but who conscientiously thought that the existing Government, notwithstanding its heavy drawbacks, was better than the anarchy of utopists, anarchists, and talkers, which it had superseded, and that it had at least the merit of preserving an amount and kind of order in which the ideas of a better system might grow up. Events, in the opinion of the present writer, only confirmed what sound political judgment might have led men to expect—namely, that this was a grave miscalculation. Sedan and the Treaty of Frankfort proved it. But if Cobden thought better of the Empire than it deserved, not a few good and high-minded Frenchmen erred with him.

Our second remark, however, is that Cobden was probably as well aware as others of the evils and perils of the Empire. He was no blind believer in the Emperor, as his letters testify. It was not his tendency to believe blindly in any governments. But he always revolted from the pharisaical censoriousness and most unseemly licence with which English journalists and others are accustomed to write about the rulers and the affairs of foreign nations. He always inclined to moral, no less than to a material, non-intervention in the domestic doings of other countries, and thought it right to observe and counsel a language of scrupulous decency towards a government in which the bulk of the French nation formally and deliberately acquiesced.

Apart from such considerations as these, Cobden would probably have defended himself for acting with such a government as that of Louis Napoleon, by the plain argu-

ment that in politics it is wise not to throw away any opportunity of getting a good thing done. The Empire was there, and it was the part of sound sense to secure from it whatever compensation it might be made to afford for its flagrant and admitted disadvantages. It is sometimes said that the policy of Free Trade has been damaged in the opinion of France, by being thus associated with the ruined Empire. Apart from the fact that later governments have not ventured to go back from the Treaty policy, if this plea against Cobden were in any degree true, we ought to find the desire for protection strongest in those parts where dislike of the Empire is strongest. This is notoriously not the case. The feeling about the Treaty uniformly follows the interests of the people concerned, and is absolutely independent of any feeling as to the government by which the Treaty was made.

This was in fact Cobden's own case. He knew as well as any one else that the position of the Emperor was that of a gambler, who might be driven by the chances of fortune to acts of desperation. But he insisted that, so far as England was concerned, the Emperor nursed no criminal designs, but, on the contrary, made friendship with England the keystone of his system. He insisted, moreover, that even if it were otherwise, still the most solid and durable check to the development of hostile purposes would be found in the promotion of close and deeply interested commercial intercourse between the people of the two countries. The change in the relations between the governments of France and England for the last twenty years, in the language of the French and English press, in the mutual sentiments of the two peoples, is the verification of Cobden's hope and foresight.

CHAPTER XXX.

HOLIDAY AND RETURN TO PARIS.

1860. Æt. 56. MOST men would have been content, after such an achievement as the Treaty, to sink instantly into the repose of a long holiday. If Cobden had been so exclusively interested in a mere increase of trade as his adversaries believed, he would have cared very little for the Italian question. As a matter of fact he cared intensely for it, and thought clearly about it. He had as definite ideas and as deep an anxiety about foreign affairs as Lord Palmerston himself. It was in method that the vast difference existed between them, not in the supposed fact that one had a foreign policy and the other had none. Cobden went straight from the Foreign Office, where he had just signed the revised Treaty, to the Austrian Embassy. Prince Metternich was not at home, but Cobden returned the next day and delivered his soul on the subject of Venetia, which was then jeoparding the European peace.

We have to remember that all this time the entanglements of Italy had been distracting the Powers. Throughout the negotiations on the Treaty, which, as we shall see, lasted until the autumn of 1860, the group of difficulties known as the Italian question engrossed the attention of every statesman in Europe. The Emperor of the French was more dangerously involved in these difficulties than any one else, not excepting Victor Emmanuel himself. The Treaties of

Zurich, which gave definitive shape to the preliminaries agreed upon between Napoleon and Francis Joseph at Villafranca (July 11, 1859), had been signed during Cobden's short visit to London in November. 1860. ÆT. 56.

The base of these Treaties, which proved the most absolutely abortive documents in the whole history of diplomacy, was the proposed formation of an Italian Confederation under the honorary presidency of the Pope; the cession of Lombardy, save the two great fortresses of Peschiera and Mantua, to the King of Sardinia; admission of Venetia to the Italian Confederation, while remaining a possession of Austria; the restoration of the Dukes of Tuscany and Modena. There was, at the moment when Cobden saw Prince Metternich, no prospect of a single article of either Treaty being realized. The Grand Dukes dared not enter their former dominions. The Romagna would not receive back the agents of the Pope. The Italians would have nothing to say to a Confederation, and insisted on unity. The Pope protested, in language that was more energetic than saintly, against all that had been done, and denounced a pamphlet which was known to be written by the French Emperor as a monument of hypocrisy and an ignoble tissue of contradictions.[1]

The deadlock of the moment was unique. The force of circumstances had brought the European powers to a policy of non-intervention, not by their own free will, but because the peril of departing from it was grave and instant. The Emperor of Austria and the Emperor of the French were equally bound by the Treaty of Zurich, but the Treaty of Zurich was desperate. Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell, whose sympathies were generously given to the cause of Italy, were inclined to a course which might not

[1] "The Emperor is decidedly too fond of seeing himself in print," Cobden wrote in his journal, when *Le Pape et le Congrès* appeared.

1860. Ær. 56. improbably have drawn England into war.[2] The case was exactly that which many partisans of the general principle of non-intervention have taken as beyond the limits of that principle; it was a case, namely, of intervention by English diplomacy to enforce non-intervention by Austria in the rights of the people of Italy to settle their own government. However this may be, there was no objection to the informal diplomacy in which Cobden now innocently engaged, and those who realize the interest and prodigious peril of the Italian question in the early weeks of 1860 will perhaps care to know what was Cobden's advice to Austria. It was Austrian policy in regard to Venetia that made the cardinal difficulty.

"*Jan.* 30, 1860.—Called and conversed for nearly an hour with Prince Metternich, the Austrian ambassador, upon the subject of the affairs of Italy. I took special care at the outset to explain to him that I held no diplomatic or other official post; that the Treaty of Commerce having been signed, for which alone I had been named plenipotentiary, I reverted to my former capacity of an independent member of Parliament, having no connexion with the English Government; and that neither Lord Cowley nor any one else was aware of my intention of calling on the Prince. I then observed that the interest I felt in the cause of European peace, and the fear I felt lest a rupture might again take place on the Italian question, had emboldened me to call to ask his attention for a few minutes to what I had to say, premising that I did not ask or expect him to offer any opinion in reply. I began by explaining very frankly the state of public opinion in England, as well as in the United States, on the Italian question; that the popular sympathies were everywhere strongly in favour of the Italians; and that if

[2] See Mr. Ashley's *Life of Lord Palmerston*, ii. chapter 15, p. 382. Mem. of Jan. 5, 1860.

another struggle should arise for the independence of 1860.
Venetia, and especially if it were attended with slaughter ÆT. 56.
of civilians, or sack of an unarmed community, it would be very difficult for any government in England to prevent the feeling of horror and resentment from assuming the form of material aid to the Italians. I then proceeded to hint whether, in such a state of things as existed in Venetia, it would not be true wisdom in the Austrian Government to contemplate some arrangement by which the danger of war might be averted; that there were people now speculating on the prospects of war this spring, and they might not be unwilling to promote such a result; and I then frankly added that I did not believe there was any other mode by which the danger could be effectually met but by abandoning Venetia to the Italians, taking in return an indemnity which I thought might be made to amount to a very important sum of money.

"I then continued (as he did not seem desirous of taking a part in the conversation) to urge some reasons for entertaining such an idea. I showed the great pecuniary loss which Austria suffered from the possession of Venetia; that the cost of holding the province in subjection was far more than its income; that I believed there were now so many soldiers in possession of Venetia, that they were equal to one for every ten of the entire population; that this state of things was growing every year worse and worse, and that whilst the present cost was so burdensome to the resources of Austria, the imminent danger of the future prevented her Government from directing its energies to the improvement of the internal resources of the Empire.

"He now gradually took a part in the conversation, giving me credit for the singleness of purpose which had induced me to call on him, and said that my antecedents upon the question of peace, and the extension of commerce,

1860. were a justification for the course I was taking. He frankly
Ær. 56. avowed that he did not justify everything that his government had been doing of late in Italy, and that he blamed especially the mode in which they had commenced the war last year. He observed that, speaking only his own individual sentiments, he did not consider that, 'if the interests of the peace of Europe called for such an arrangement,' it would be 'absolutely impossible' for Austria to come to terms with Venetia, by which their relations might be placed upon a different footing. He hinted at the appointment of a Grand Duke with greater local powers. His ideas did not go to the extent of a complete alienation of territory. Indeed, he expressed an opinion that the great body of the population of Venetia were not so much disaffected towards the present order of things as was supposed; that the agitation against the Austrian Government was factitious, and so forth.

"I endeavoured to combat this view by drawing his attention to the immense military force kept up. He said that this was rendered necessary by the hostile attitude of their next neighbour. I pointed to this as an inevitable state of things; and I observed that, although I had no sympathy for the dynastic ambition of the King of Sardinia, or for the plans of annexation which were entertained by his Minister, still it could not be denied that the kingdom of Sardinia was a growing power, possessing to a large extent the sympathy of the world, and that therefore the permanent influence of that State, as a hostile neighbour, must always be taken into account in the value to be put upon Venetia. I declared my belief that the two races would become every year more and more alienated, and that it would be impossible permanently to keep possession of Venetia, or that it could only be held at a ruinous loss to the Government of Vienna. I remarked that whilst Austria possessed Lom-

bardy, she had a comparatively ancient title to her Italian possessions, but she had come into such recent possession of her Venetian territory, and the mode in which Venice had been given over to her by Bonaparte, at Campo Formio, was such an outrage upon all justice and decency, that Europe felt a sort of shame at having been made a party to such an act of violence at the Congress of Vienna, and it would be held by many to be a duty to contribute towards a redress of the evil. 1860. Æт. 56.

"He said that Austria was peculiarly circumstanced; that it was a collection of nationalities; and that it would be a serious thing to begin a process of selling the independence of a province of the Empire. I said there was no analogy between the state of Venetia and that of Hungary or Bohemia; that nobody considered the latter kingdoms as being anxious for complete separation from Austria, but merely as aiming at a reform in their administration—a question about which foreigners were comparatively little concerned. Whereas, on the contrary, the Italian question engrossed the attention of the political world, and everywhere it was regarded as a danger to the peace of Europe. He said it would be a very delicate question what would become of the province of Venetia if it were abandoned; that it might possibly be annexed to Piedmont, and there would probably be objections to the aggrandisement of the military monarchy. On the other hand, the Italian states might quarrel or fall into anarchy, and call for the intervention of neighbouring states. He alluded to the serious consideration of how far it would be wise in Austria to give up so powerful a strategic position as the great fortresses presented, that the Italian Tyrol might be attacked, or the territory on the Adriatic, etc. I said that the wisest course for Austria would be to give the full control of their future destinies to the population of Venetia;

1860. that a magnanimous policy was the best, and the only one
ÆT. 56. becoming a great Empire; that it would, besides, be quite useless to attempt to bind the people of Venetia, for that the world was more and more inclined to recognize the rights of the people to choose their own mode of government, and their own alliances and amalgamation; and, therefore, that if the people of Venetia chose to annex themselves to Piedmont, it would not be likely that any Power would interfere to prevent them. As respected the great fortresses, I said that I would not advise their being given up but destroyed, that I would blow them up, and, if possible, raze them to the ground.

"I then came to the plain statement of the plan I would follow. I would sell the independence of Venetia for a large sum, which no doubt might be easily arranged; with that money, say twenty or thirty millions sterling, I would put the finances of the Austrian Government in order, restore the currency, re-establish my credit, and then apply myself to the internal reforms of the Empire. I knew no country where there was such a field for improvement as in Austria; that a few years of fiscal and commercial amelioration would add immensely to the wealth and power of the Empire; that, even with the loss of the Italian provinces, the population of Austria would be about equal to that of France, and greater than that of England, and would contain resources which, if properly developed, might in a few years make her one of the richest and most prosperous countries in Europe. I at the same time pointed out the evils which must arise from the present state of the finances and the currency in Austria; that all mercantile operations, and all contracts between individuals, must be rendered more and more difficult and insecure, so long as the future of the Empire is involved in so much uncertainty, and whilst the circulating medium is subjected to such constant depreciation.

"The Prince showed much earnestness of feeling in his conversation. He wore an humbled air, as well he might, considering the topic on which we were conversing, which was nothing less than whether it would be advisable to sell a part of the Empire to save the rest. After reiterated apologies for the liberty I had taken in calling on him, which he received in the best possible spirit, I left him. If I could spend a month in Vienna, and see the leading men in the Government circles there, I feel a presentiment that I could bring them to my views on this difficult and important subject."

The next day Cobden started for the south of France, and he remained there until the last week in March. He made Cannes his headquarters, and hoped for sunshine and warmth. Unluckily, cloudy skies and keen winds confirmed his opinion that, if we would make sure of a second summer in the year, it cannot be had in Europe; men must imitate the swallows and migrate into Africa. Cobden's elastic and joyful temperament, however, atoned for defects of climate, and his diary is a record of lively excursions and genial intercourse with friends. Among his daily companions were Bunsen, Henri Martin, Arles Dufour, Legouvé, Mérimée, and occasionally Lord Brougham. Those who have been accustomed to think of Cobden as wrapped up in tariffs and the vulgarities of Parliament might well be amazed at the eagerness with which he notes the house to which Rachel was brought to die, and the circumstances of her last hours; at his enthusiasm for the fine landscapes; at the sincerity of interest with which he listened for long hours while Bunsen talked to him about Egyptian antiquities, and read his latest successes in deciphering hieroglyphs. Every day brought to his curious and observant mind new stores of information, political, social, and industrial, and still he had interest left for gossip and the trivialities that help such men across from one serious thought to another.

1860. ÆT. 56. The people of the country wished to make their visitor useful; and three of the principal inhabitants of Grasse came to beg of him that when he returned to Paris he would say a word to M. Rouher in favour of a railroad from Grasse to Cannes. "I remarked," says Cobden, "that in England a rich and industrious community like theirs would have a meeting, and form a company to make a line for themselves, seeing that it was calculated that it would pay a good interest for the investment. They replied that it was not their way of doing things in France; they were accustomed to look to the government to take the initiative; and as other parts of France were assisted by government, they might as well be assisted also. They said that in the month of May, when the flowers were brought into Grasse for making them into scented waters, pomades, etc., one house would sometimes receive several tons of rose-leaves in a morning."

In the course of his stay, Cobden paid a visit to some friends at Nice, where the expected annexation to France was the general topic of conversation among people of all classes. It is perhaps worth while, considering the violent agitation which this transaction was shortly to rouse in England, to reproduce Cobden's impression of the public feeling on the spot:—"I found it very difficult," he says, "to ascertain the prevailing state of opinion on the subject. As a general rule, I found that people's inclinations in the matter followed pretty closely the direction of their personal interests. The shopkeepers and tradespeople of the town, who thought their business would be improved by the change, were in favour of annexation. The professional men, the advocates, and lawyers, whose interests would suffer, were generally opposed to the project. The land-owners and peasants were said by some to be favourable, and by others to be opposed. It was very difficult to ascer-

tain the state of public opinion, for almost every person I consulted differed from the one I had previously talked to. Sometimes I found members of the same household divided in opinion. Whilst talking to M. A., a banker, in his counting-house, who was using various reasons in favour of annexation, his clerks, who were in an adjoining office, separated by a glass partition, and who overheard his remarks, were expressing by signs and gestures their dissent from his remarks. Again, on the same day, whilst calling on M. D., who was offering an opinion to the effect that the population generally were in favour of the proposed change, he was contradicted very emphatically by a lady who was present."

On the 22nd of March, Cobden found himself once more in Paris.

"*March* 26.—Called on Lord Cowley. He appeared harassed and worried. Since I last saw him, the Savoy question had come to a crisis; and the correspondence had all been published in a parliamentary blue book. He and his Secretary of Legation complained of the practice of printing the despatches giving an account of the conversations held with foreign ministers or other personages, remarking that these reports of what passes at a gossiping interview may be very proper for the eye of a Secretary of State, but become very inconvenient when exposed to the eye of the whole world; that their publication has the effect of making ministers of state unwilling to hold oral communications with diplomatic agents. Lord C. complained of the conduct of the Emperor in the Savoy question; alleged broadly that he had been deceived by him; that for the first time he had acted in such a way as to completely destroy all confidence in future in him; he stated that he had, in an interview with the Emperor, told him frankly that he had not

1860. acted towards the English Government and its ambassador
ÆT. 56. with the openness which had characterized all their previous intercourse; that it was less the question of the annexation of Savoy than the way in which it was effected, which caused the present coolness and alienation between the two Governments. . . . .

"*March* 28.—Called on M. Fould, the Minister of State, and had half an hour's conversation with him. Speaking of the misunderstanding which had arisen between the French and English Governments since I last saw him, just before my departure for Cannes, he complained of Lord John Russell, our Foreign Minister, and observed that he had been always in their way; that he was opposed to the Treaty of Villafranca, and afterwards was the chief cause why the terms of that Treaty were not carried out and the Grand Dukes restored to their sovereignties. I remarked that it was utterly out of the question that force should have been resorted to for the restoration of the Dukes. He replied that force would not have been necessary if England had given her moral support to the principle, but that Lord John Russell encouraged the Italian people to resist the wishes of the French Emperor, and thus rendered the fulfilment of the Treaty of Villafranca impossible; that it was in consequence of this that the change in the Emperor's plans became necessary, and that the annexation of Savoy was afterwards resorted to; that if the terms of the Peace of Villafranca could have been carried out, France would not have thought of any extension of her frontier. In the course of conversation, he said that the English Court were much opposed to the French Government, and that Prince Albert was very Austrian in his sympathies.

"*March* 29.—Dined with Prince Napoleon and the Princess Clotilde, and met a large party. The company were less than an hour at the table. The present Emperor

has introduced the fashion of using great despatch at the dinner-table. 1860.

"*March* 30.—Had an audience with the Emperor in the morning at the Tuileries. After saying a few words about my visit to Cannes, and expressing his congratulations that the British Parliament had at last passed the Treaty of Commerce, he referred to the state of the relations between his Government and that of England upon the subject of the annexation of Savoy to France. He complained of the manner in which he was attacked, and in which his conduct and motives were misrepresented by the press of England, and by some of the speakers in the House of Commons. I remarked that I had not had the opportunity of reading the papers laid before Parliament upon the Savoy question, and was not therefore in possession of the facts of the case, but as far as I understood the ground of the misunderstanding which had unfortunately arisen between the two governments, since I last had the honour of an audience with his Majesty, it was caused less by what his government had actually done, in annexing Savoy and Nice to France, than by the manner in which it had been effected. He then volunteered an explanation in a few words of what had been his course from the beginning on this question; changing from English, in which we had before been speaking, to French, for the more convenient and rapid delivery of his narrative.

"He said that, previous to entering on the war against Austria, he had had an understanding with the King of Sardinia and Count Cavour, to the effect that if the result should be the driving of the Austrians out of Lombardy and Venetia, and the annexing of those provinces to Piedmont, then France would require the fulfilment of two conditions on the part of the King of Sardinia, viz. the payment of the expenses of the war (which the Emperor

1860. said had amounted to 300,000,000 francs), and the cession
ÆT. 56. of Savoy and Nice. These terms were assented to, in a general way, by the Government of Sardinia. The result of the war had been less decisive than he had expected; he acquired only Lombardy, which he had annexed to Piedmont, without the intention of claiming Savoy, and not intending to ask for more than a portion of the expenses of the war. The subsequent events, which had induced him to change his views, were wholly unexpected by him, and they were brought about in spite of his efforts to prevent them. Central Italy refused to take back its former rulers, and insisted on annexation to Piedmont, which gave the latter power as large an acquisition of territory, and as great a population in Italy (about 11,000,000), as if Venetia had been added to its dominions. Under these circumstances he had felt justified in claiming the cession of Savoy.

"After finishing this narrative, he again recurred to the attacks and misrepresentations to which he was exposed. He said he was quite *désolé* to find that, in spite of his frank and loyal policy towards other Powers, he was still exposed to such unjust charges. I remarked that too much importance was sometimes attached to the strictures of a newspaper writer, or the language of a member of the House of Commons; that he knew the state of things in England too well to require to be told that any writer could publish whatever he pleased anonymously, and that a member of the House could utter whatever opinions he liked; that people sometimes fell into the error of regarding the utterances of an individual, who was perhaps actuated by very unworthy personal motives, as the expression of a large public opinion; and I added the declaration of my belief that this misunderstanding between the two countries would be of an evanescent character; that it would admit of explanations which would remove all grounds of serious dis-

agreement. He joined in the expression of this wish. I then observed that I could see but one possible cause of war between the two countries; that the mercantile and manufacturing and mining interests have the power and determination to keep the peace so long as it is their interest to do so; but the danger, and in my own opinion the only danger, was that the expenditure for our warlike armaments might be so increased that it would some day be possible to present to the people the argument that war might be less costly than the perpetual burden of a war expenditure in a time of peace; that I had heard very sedate and grave persons argue in this way; and that, leaving out of the question the sacrifice of life and limb, it was difficult to answer their reasoning on economical grounds. I mentioned the enormous sums we were voting this year for our armaments. 1860. Æt. 56.

"He said he did not know what he could do to prevent it, or how he was responsible for such a state of things; that, as regarded the navy, he was not spending so much on it as he ought to do, or as was laid down as necessary in Louis Philippe's time; and he referred to the dialogue between an Englishman and a Frenchman, which he had composed and sent for publication to the *Times* newspaper; it contained some exact details respecting the strength of the French navy. I reminded him that his experiments on iron-cased ships had led us into some expenses of the same kind. I mentioned that I had seen one of his *frégates blindées* at Toulon, with an iron casing about four inches in thickness; that no sooner were they ordered to be built, than we began to construct line-of-battle ships with iron sides six inches thick, and that Mr. Whitworth had subsequently invented a gun which had projected a bullet through this thickness of iron, in addition to a couple of feet of solid timber; that I thought all this a very deplorable waste, and unworthy of the age in which we lived.

1860.
ÆT. 56.

"We then talked of the Treaty of Commerce, and the remaining details which are yet to be settled. I argued that it was more than ever desirable, in the present unsatisfactory state of the relations between the two governments, that this Treaty, which was intended to unite the peoples of France and England in the bonds of commercial dependence, should be completely carried out. I urged several reasons why the duties should be moderate. He expressed his concurrence in this, and said the only subject on which he felt any anxiety was that of iron; that the difficulty was the want of railroads to convey the ore to the coal; that in two years' time he hoped this evil would be remedied.

"On my rising to depart, he asked me to accept a vase as a souvenir. I left my address in London where it would be delivered. I hope it will be of small value.[1]

"*March* 31.—Dined at M. Rouher's, the Minister of Commerce, where a large party was assembled, everybody present except myself being decorated with orders and ribbons. I sat beside Prince Napoleon, and had a good deal of conversation upon the subject of our rival armaments. . . . . He did not think it was impossible to come to an agreement for limiting the naval forces of the two countries; but he thought that whilst our aristocracy retained its present power, it would be very difficult to carry out such a policy in England. He repeated several times, and with emphasis, that it would not be impossible on the part of France. In the course of conversation, when speaking of the inaptitude of the French for self-government, he remarked, 'And yet they are always crying out for liberty! They want the right of governing themselves, and yet they claim the right of exempting themselves from the *duties* of self-government.'"

[1] The vase may be seen at the South Kensington Museum, whither Mrs. Cobden sent it shortly after the death of her husband.

A day or two after, Cobden returned to England. And here we may for a moment turn from his public activity to say so much as may be necessary about some of his private concerns. The subject is painful enough, just as it is painful even at this distance of time to think of Burke's genius being humiliated and impeded by the straits of embarrassed circumstances. So much publicity, however, was given to Cobden's affairs, partly by the spleen of political adversaries, and partly by the indiscretion of friends, that it is proper to describe the transaction of this period as it really was. A few lines fortunately will suffice. We have seen that of the sum raised in 1846 as a proof of the public gratitude for his services in the cause of Free Trade, the bulk had been employed in meeting the heavy losses incurred in Cobden's business, during the time when he was absorbed in the agitation against the Corn Laws. What happened to the balance which had been invested in the shares of the Illinois Central Railway, we have also seen. There was, moreover, the continued drain of the chief rent on the unhappy purchase of land at Manchester.[4] The upshot was that after his return from the United States Cobden found his resources practically exhausted, and his position had become extremely serious. 1860. Æt. 56.

Under these circumstances he applied to one of his oldest and most confidential friends in Manchester for aid and advice. What he sought was that a few men who could afford to wait for a return on their money, might be induced to buy the building land from him at a certain valuation, which should include some of that prospective value which he insisted on seeing in it. In this letter he said to his friend, in words that will touch all who can think gently of a man for taking too little heed of his own interests, for the sake of the commonwealth: "My hair," he said, "has been

[4] Vol. i. p. 159.

1860. Æt. 56. growing grey latterly with the thoughts of what is to become of my children. If I were to consult my duty to them, I should withdraw from Parliament, and accept some public employment, by which I might earn 2000*l.* a year. The present Ministry have, through my friend Lord H——, sounded me as to my willingness to take such an office. But I see the difficulty of justifying my withdrawal from Parliament at the present time. . . . . It is one of the miseries of a public man's life that he must be liable under such circumstances to have his private troubles gibbeted before the whole world." [1]

It is not necessary to follow the course of what followed. It was found that nothing effectual could be done with the land. So a little group of Cobden's most intimate friends took counsel together, and in the end a subscription was privately raised which amounted to the sum of 40,000*l.* The names of those who contributed to it, between ninety and a hundred persons in all, he never knew. He requested that a list might be given to him in a sealed cover. After his death the executors found the envelope in his desk, with the seal still unbroken. Such an endowment was a gracious and munificent testimonial to his devoted public spirit. The fact that Cobden had so richly earned the gift, made him, as it may make us, none the less sensible of the considerate liberality of the givers.

[1] To Mr. John Slagg, Sept. 5, 1859.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE TARIFF—THE FORTIFICATION SCHEME.

It is not necessary for us to follow the fortunes of the Treaty 1860.
in England. They belong rather to our fiscal and parlia- ÆT. 56.
mentary history, than to the biography of one of the negotiators. The Treaty was laid before Parliament by Lord John Russell, and its provisions were fully explained, along with the changes which the Government proposed in our fiscal system as a consequence of this Treaty, by Mr. Gladstone in a memorable speech (Feb. 10) which for lucidity and grasp has never been surpassed. He did not forget to pay a just tribute to his absent colleague. "Rare," said Mr. Gladstone, "is the privilege of any man who having fourteen years ago rendered to his country one signal and splendid service, now again within the same brief span of life, decorated neither by rank nor title, bearing no mark to distinguish him from the people whom he serves, has been permitted again to perform a great and memorable service to his country."

The leader of the Opposition did not fall far behind in civil words, while conveying in his compliment to Cobden a characteristic sneer at the hated Whigs? Mr. Disraeli (Feb. 20) took credit for having recognized the great ability and the honourable and eminent position of the secret agent of the Treaty, long before they had been recognized by those "sympathizing statesmen of whom he was somehow doomed

1860. never to be the colleague." But at the same time, he
ÆT. 56. detected in the Treaty the idiosyncrasies of the negotiator: he saw the negotiator's strong personal convictions in the wanton sacrifice of so many sources of revenue; he saw it in the light treatment of belligerent rights.

Then the parliamentary battle began according to the well-known rules. Private secretaries rapidly hunted up the circumstances of Pitt's Commercial Treaty of 1786, and their chiefs set to work to show that the precedent had been accurately followed, or else, if they happened to sit on the other side of the House, that it had been most unreasonably departed from. Men whose intellectual position was so strong as that of Sir James Graham and Earl Grey, protested against the policy of commercial treaties. One member, as I have already mentioned, still happily alive and vocal, asked if it had come to this—that the free Parliament of England sat to register the decrees of the despot of France. There was the usual abundance of predictions, in which the barely possible was raised to the degree of probable or certain, and to which the only answer was that men were not bound to believe them. The great authority from the city prophesied that there would be no permanent enlargement of our trade with France as a consequence of the Treaty. Mr. Disraeli declared that he had always strongly desired an improvement of our commercial relations with France, and even if that improvement took the form of a commercial treaty he could endure it: but this was a bad treaty; it was calculated to sow the seeds of discord and dissension between the two countries. Mr. Disraeli's chief in the House of Lords argued that the time was inopportune for a reduction of the sources of revenue; and he pointed out that the Treaty admitted to France articles of vital importance for purposes of war, and the Government itself acted in other

respects as if war were not improbable. Here Lord Derby made a point, as Cobden would have been the first to admit. The policy of 1860 was a double policy. The Treaty implied confidence in peace, while the estimates implied a strong expectation of war. If war were as near a contingency as the tone of some of the Ministers seemed to show, then the budget of 1860 was open to the criticism on the budget of 1853, the great peace budget which immediately preceded the Crimean War.

After much skirmishing, the real debate came on in the House of Commons, on a motion that it was not expedient to diminish the sources of revenue, nor to re-impose the income tax at a needlessly high rate. The discussion extended over three nights, and at the end of it the division gave to the Government a majority of 116. Mr. Gladstone had met happily enough the serious objections, as distinguished from those which were invented in the usual way of party business. Nothing, he said, was given to France which was of any value to us. On the other hand, nothing was received from France except a measure by which that country conferred a benefit upon itself. At a small loss of revenue we had gained a great extension of trade. These propositions told with great weight against the theoretic objection that a commercial treaty tends to mislead nations as to the true nature of the transaction. In any case this was an objection which was very little calculated to affect a body endowed with the rough and blunt intellectual temper of the House of Commons.

On his arrival in London, meanwhile, at the beginning of April, Cobden found that the Government had determined to send out a Commission to arrange the details of the tariff. The Commission was to consist of a chief and two official subordinates. The subordinates had already been named: one from the Board of Trade, and another from the Cus-

1860. toms. The latter was represented by Mr. R. A. Ogilvie, the
Æt. 56. late Surveyor General of Customs, and the Board of Trade was represented by Mr. Louis Mallet, who speedily impressed Cobden, as the diaries show, by his strong intelligence and efficiency, and who afterwards became one of the most eminent advocates of Cobden's principles to be found among English statesmen. The Government thought that it would be beneath Cobden's dignity to accept the office of chief commissioner and to correspond with the Board of Trade, after having been a plenipotentiary and having corresponded with the Foreign Office. Cobden began to fear that the chief who might be appointed would not prove quite a man after his own heart, so, he says, "as I felt no concern whatever about the loss of dignity, I volunteered to come out to Paris myself as chief commissioner, and to sign the supplementary treaty as plenipotentiary when it is completed. I am afraid I have undertaken a very difficult and tedious task. But having begun the good work, I must pursue it to the end, and probably I could not transfer it to other hands without damage to the cause."[1]

In fact, it was clear that though the diplomatic or political part of the work had been effectually done, the more difficult commercial part still remained. The Treaty was hardly more than a rough and provisional sketch. When it reached the Board of Trade the amazement of that office was not altogether pleasurable, for a department is capable of self-love, and the officials privately felt that they had been made rather light of. It was soon perceived that from the point of view of their office the Treaty did not carry things far. In the first article the Emperor had engaged that in no case should the duties on a long list of articles of British production and manufacture exceed thirty per cent. This was to be the limit. But a duty of thirty per cent. was nearly as bad as

[1] *To M. Chevalier.* April 14, 1860.

prohibition. All depended on the results of the thirteenth article. Article thirteen ran to the effect that the *ad valorem* duties established within the limits fixed by the preceding articles should be converted into specific duties by a Supplementary Convention.[2]

[2] It may be convenient here to reproduce the description of the terms of the Treaty, from Mr. Gladstone's speech explaining it to the House of Commons:—"First," he said, "I will take the engagements of France. France engages to reduce the duty on English coal and coke, from the 1st of July, 1860; on bar and pig iron and steel, from the 1st of October, 1860; on tools and machinery, from the 1st of December, 1860; and on yarns and goods in flax and hemp, including, I believe, jute—this last an article comparatively new in commerce, but one in which a great and very just interest is felt in some great trading districts,—from the 1st of June, 1861. That is the first important engagement into which France enters. Her second and greater engagement is postponed to the 1st of October, 1861. I think it is probably in the knowledge of the Committee that this postponement is stipulated under a pledge given by the Government of France to the classes who there, as here, have supposed themselves to be interested in the maintenance of prohibition. On the 1st of October, then, in the year 1861, France engages to reduce the duties and to take away the prohibitions on all the articles of British production mentioned in a certain list, in such a manner that no duty upon any one of those articles shall thereafter exceed thirty per cent. *ad valorem*. I do not speak of articles of food, which do not materially enter into the treaty; but the list to which I refer, includes all the staples of British manufacture, whether of yarns, flax, hemp, hair, wool, silk, or cotton,—all manufactures of skins, leather, bark, wood; iron, and all other metals; glass, stoneware, earthenware, or porcelain. I will not go through the whole list; it is indeed needless, for I am not aware of any great or material article that is omitted. France also engages to commute those *ad valorem* duties into rated duties by a separate convention, to be framed for the purpose of giviug effect to the terms I have described. But if there should be a disagreement as to the terms on which they should be rated under the convention, then the *maximum* chargeable on every class at thirty per cent. *ad valorem* will be levied at the proper period, not in the form of a rated duty, but upon the value; and the value will be determined by the process now in use in the English customs.

"I come next, sir, to the English covenants. England engages, with a limited power of exception, which we propose to exercise only with regard to two or three articles, to abolish immediately and totally all duties upon all manufactured goods. There will be a sweep, summary, entire, and absolute, of what are known as manufactured goods from the face of the British tariff. Farther, England engages to reduce the duty on brandy, from 15*s*. the gallon to the level of the colonial duty, viz. 8*s*. 2*d*. per gallon. She engages to reduce immediately the duty on foreign wine. In the treaty it is of course French wine which is specified; but it is perfectly under-

1860. — ÆT. 56. If it appears absurd that Cobden should ever have been content with an arrangement that left the French with a possible protection so high as thirty per cent., we must recall the conditions of the case. Hitherto the system in France had been one of absolute prohibition. It was the system of monopolies in all its perfection and completeness. Suddenly to break down this high wall of exclusion was politically impossible. To tell the great ironmasters, the cotton-spinners, the woollen manufacturers, that they were to pass at a step from monopoly to free competition, would be to shake the very Throne. A duty in their favour of no more than ten per cent. would have seemed a mockery to men who had been accustomed to command their own prices. The Emperor dared not open the battle with a lower protection than thirty per cent. It was for the English Government to have this brought down to as near ten per cent. as they could. M. Rouher, who believed faithfully in free competition, hoped and intended that this process of beating down the great duty allowed by the terms of the Treaty should be effectively carried out. Cobden knew much better than his critics how much remained to be done; but then he trusted M. Rouher and the Emperor. This was the merit of his diplomacy, that he knew whom he could trust; and he always felt that here, and not in perpetual suspicion, is the secret of effective and wise diplomacy, as distinguished from the policy of craft and war. The result showed in the present instance, that the Emperor and M. Rouher deserved his confidence.

Cobden arrived in Paris on April 20th, and it was the

stood between France and ourselves, that we proceed with regard to the commodities of all countries alike. England engages, then, to reduce the duty on wine, from a rate nearly reaching *5s. 10d.* per gallon, to *3s.* per gallon. She engages, besides a present reduction, farther to reduce that duty from the 1st of April, 1861, to a scale which has reference to the strength of the wine measured by the quantity of spirit it contains."

5th of November before his labours were concluded. They were of the most toilsome and fatiguing kind. The circumstances were without precedent or example, and the whole course of procedure had to be created. When the English commissioners reached Paris, they found that the French Government had agreed to refer the subject of the rates of duty to the Conseil Supérieur, a body rarely convoked, and consisting of the greatest commercial men in France. The Conseil Supérieur took evidence from French and English manufacturers and producers, as to the comparative cost of production in the two countries. Iron had been dealt with in the Treaty itself, and it was the only article on which the rate was there definitely fixed. All other articles were left open. What Cobden and his colleagues had to do was in the first instance to prepare the English witnesses, to collect and shape their evidence, and to have it carefully translated for the Conseil Supérieur. This tedious process lasted until the end of July. It was August before the sittings of the definitive Commission began. The business which Cobden and his two official colleagues had now to do, was nothing less than to go through the whole list of British products and manufactures, and to prove in each case to the French Commissioners that from the circumstances of the special trade they ought to be content with a given duty. Every day at two o'clock the three Englishmen sat round a table in one of the saloons of the palace in the Quai d'Orsai, with about three times as many representatives of the hostile interests of France. The various products of British industry came up in turn. The French Commissioners cried for their import duty of thirty per cent. Cobden called for ten per cent. Then the battle began. The English numbered no more than the Graces, while the French were as many as the Muses. The French, in strategical language,

1860. Æt. 56. were close to their base of operations, for if they wanted more knowledge as to a given trade, there were men who were quite able and only too happy to supply it in the next street or in the anteroom. The Englishmen were dependent on the accident of the right man having come to Paris from home. They were obliged to represent all branches of industry, to master the important facts of a hundred special trades, to meet from their own secondhand knowledge, picked up the evening before and digested in the forenoon, antagonists whose knowledge was personal and acquired by a life's experience. The enterprise called for nothing less than the dexterity and pliancy of a first-rate advocate, united to the dogged industry of the compiler of a commercial encyclopædia. Iron gave most trouble. Though the rate had been fixed in the Treaty, the classification of its descriptions remained. The ironmasters, Cobden told Mr. Bright, "are the landed interest of France. They constitute the prætorian guards of monopoly. Almost everybody of rank and wealth is directly or indirectly interested in iron-works of some kind. Bankers, courtiers, authors (Thiers and St. Marc Girardin, to wit), bishops, and priests, are to be found in the ranks of the ironmasters. M. Schneider—the Duke of Richmond of the interest—is one of the Commission sitting to try himself. The French witnesses, of course, all tell the old story of alarm and ruin, and discourse most feelingly of the misery which their work-people will suffer if their protection be withdrawn. . . . . I am transported back twenty years."

Apart from the monotony of these proceedings, what to Cobden was harder to bear than tedium, was the dishonesty and bad faith of some of those with whom he had to deal. The more unscrupulous among the protectionists falsified the facts of their various trades, and played dishonest tricks with returns of cost, wages, and prices. On one

occasion, a French commissioner, who had made himself 1860.
the mouthpiece of the protectionists, tried to counter ÆT. 56.
some demand of Cobden's by one of these fabrications. Cobden, worn out by the iteration of such shameless devices, could no longer contain himself, and in angry tones called out too crude a statement of the truth. But he was usually as long-suffering as he was tenacious. There was one member of the Commission on the French side whose conduct gave him constant encouragement and support. Every day brought fresh proof of the ability, moral courage, sincerity, and good faith of M. Rouher. These are Cobden's own words, and he adds with enthusiasm that his name will go down to posterity as the Huskisson or Peel of France. No ordinary man could have effected in a twelvemonth changes which in England were spread over twenty years.

The strain of the conflict and its preparation, both on Cobden and his colleagues, was very great. The discussions at the Foreign Office usually lasted from two until six o'clock, when they went to dine. Later in the evening came laborious interviews with commercial experts from England, who brought tables, returns, extracts from ledgers. Commercial friends at home were apt to be impatient, and Cobden was obliged to write long letters of encouragement and exhortation. In the morning, after two or three hours devoted to correspondence and further interviews, soon after eleven Cobden proceeded to the offices of the English commissioners in the Rue de l'Université, where his colleagues had already arranged the matter acquired in the previous evening. This they examined and discussed and prepared for the meeting at two o'clock, when the encounter was once more opened.

Occasional relief was enjoyed in varied social intercourse. There were great official banquets with ministers of state,

1860. Æт. 56. blazing with stars and decorations. There were the balls and receptions of the ministers' wives, where Cobden ungallantly noted that the number of handsome toilettes was more striking than the beauty of their wearers. He was taken one day to see the studio of Ary Scheffer; and on another day he went with Clara Novello to visit Rossini at his villa at Passy. The composer's vivacity and cleverness pleased Cobden, and he was perhaps not displeased when the old man asked why the English were in a panic, and declared his indignation at such childishness in a great nation for whom he had all his life long felt the deepest respect. One night at the table of Arles Dufour, Cobden met Enfantin, the head of the Saint Simonians, and the most wonderful and impressive figure in the history of modern enthusiasm. The party sat until midnight, talking over the question of a mutual limitation of the armaments of France and England, and all agreed that unless something were done to put a stop to this warlike rivalry, a conflict must inevitably break out. "*If you would preserve peace,*" said Enfantin, amending the saying of the old world, "*then prepare for peace.*"

Cobden was more than once a guest at the house of the Marquis de Boissy, and the more famous Marquise, better known as the Countess Guiccioli. Cobden's simple mind was surprised at the fact that, so far from having lost caste by the notoriety of her relations with Lord Byron, the lady moved in the highest circles in Paris and was much sought after. The Marquis was a strong old Tory, vigorously opposed to Free Trade and every other reform; he predicted that the Emperor's concessions to England would be his ruin; confidently foretold a reign of terror for Italy, the death of Victor Emmanuel on the scaffold, and "many other equally pleasant and probable events." Cobden listened to all this nonsense with unruffled

humour, as was his wont; few men have ever been better able to suffer fools gladly. Only once he nearly broke down, when at a fête given by an American of high position to celebrate the Fourth of July, the host made a speech to French and English guests in that singularly bad taste which American orators so often think due to the majesty of their country. Cobden was always a missionary. At a dinner where most of the guests happened to be eminent surgeons and physicians, he tried hard to enlist them against vivisection as practised at the Veterinary College; "but I am afraid," he says, "that I did not meet with much success." He delighted in everything that extended his knowledge of men and cities. On the occasion of the Emperor's fête (Aug. 15), he walked about the streets all the evening, and observing that the great thoroughfares were closed against carriages, and kept clear for the exclusive use of pedestrians from seven until ten, he marks that "such consideration would not have been shown to the masses at the expense of the rich and luxurious classes in England."

There was one group with whom after a very short experience Cobden found it impossible to carry on any intercourse. "I have ceased to go among the Orleanist party," he told Mr. Bright; "they are hardly rational or civil." Whatever we may think of the Empire, there can only be one opinion of its Orleanist foes, that eyeless, impotent, shifty faction, who dreamed and dream on that kingdoms can be governed by literary style, and that the mighty agitations of a newly revolutionized society can be ruled by the petty combinations and infantile tactics of drawing-room intrigue.

A break in the tedium of his work, but perhaps a break of doubtful refreshment, is mentioned in a letter to his friend Mr. Hargreaves:—"For the last three days," he says, "I have been attending the debates in the Corps Législatif on

1860. Æt. 56. the Treaty. The scene reminded me of our own old doings in the House of Commons twenty years ago. The protectionists were very savage. Being recognized in the strangers' tribune, I became the object of attack and defence. It was really the old thing over again. As I was leaving the house in a shower of rain, one of the members who avowed himself a protectionist, offered me his umbrella, and he remarked, 'If we had been still under the constitutional régime, your Treaty would never have passed. Not twenty-five members of the Chamber would have been for it.'"[1]

Of one or two of the most important of Cobden's conversations, it is worth while to transcribe the reports from his own journal. On March 25 he met Count Persigny, who was then on one of his frequent visits from Albert Gate to Paris.

"He expressed himself," says Cobden, "in strong terms to me upon the subject of the present system of government in France; says the Emperor has no independent responsible ministers; that he governs, himself, in the minutest details of administration; that he has been gradually more and more assuming to himself all the powers of the State; that for two years after the formation of the Imperial government there were men in his Cabinet, such as Drouyn de l'Huys, St. Arnaud, and himself (Persigny), who exercised an independent judgment on his projects, and that he was then willing to yield to the advice and arguments of his council, but that latterly he had been accustomed to act upon his own impulse, or only to consult one of his Ministers; that his Cabinet frequently found decrees in the *Moniteur* of which they had never heard, and that this habit of secret and personal management opened the door to all kinds of intrigues, and gave the opportunity for unworthy individuals, male and female, to exercise an irre-

[1] *To William Hargreaves.* May 2, 1860.

sponsible and improper influence over the acts of the Emperor. 1860.
He blamed M. Fould for having encouraged and flattered Ær. 56.
the Emperor into this habit of ruling by his personal will, independent of his Ministers, by which he was bringing great danger on his dynasty; that he had not the genius of the first Napoleon, to whom his flatterers compared him, or his mastery of details; and that in attempting to interfere with everything, nothing was properly superintended. That he (Count de P.) was very unhappy at this state of things; that he had been for some years remonstrating against it; that he was now penning another memorial on the subject, a rough copy of which he had in his pocket; and that if he failed to effect the desired reform, he should retire from the service of the Emperor, and withdraw altogether from public life; that he was entitled to a salary of 1200*l.* a year as senator, or to a pension of 4000*l.* a year as privy councillor; that he should not accept either, but would gather together his small private fortune and retire upon that."

"*April* 26.—Called on M. Herbet, the Chairman of the French commission for arranging the details of the Treaty. M. Herbet had been six years Consul at London. In the course of conversation he remarked good-humouredly upon the aristocratic manners of the English people. When he went first to London he was a junior attaché to the Embassy, and he was then a welcome guest at the tables of the great; but when he was appointed Consul-general, with important duties and 40,000 francs per annum, he was no longer *comme il faut*, and found himself hardly worthy to be the guest of our principal merchants.

"*May* 20.—Breakfasted with Emile de Girardin, and afterwards sat with him in his garden whilst he gave me the Bonaparte programme of foreign policy, which in brief amounted to this:—that France must extend her frontier to the Rhine, after which the Emperor could afford to grant

1860. political liberty to his people; that all Belgium, with the
ÆT. 56. exception of Brussels and Antwerp, would willingly annex itself to France; that the German provinces to the left of the Rhine, though not speaking French, were Catholic and therefore inclined towards annexation, and might be bribed by a promise of an exemption from taxation for a number of years to become a portion of France; that Prussia might be indemnified by the absorption of the smaller German States, and Austria be pacified by a slice of Turkey; that after this extension of territory to the natural boundaries of France, the Bonaparte dynasty would be secured, and the Emperor would enter into an engagement for a complete system of disarmament; that in no other way can this dynasty be enabled to grant liberal institutions, and without these there can be no security for the peace of Europe; that the family of the King of Belgium might be compensated by a crown at Constantinople, etcetera. I laughed repeatedly at the *naïveté* with which he went over this unprincipled programme of foreign policy.

"*June* 8.—Called on Prince Napoleon, who in the course of conversation described the state of the relations between the governments of England and France as being very unsatisfactory; '*les choses vont mal.*' He alluded to the danger of our constantly arming in England, the uneasiness which it gave to the people, and the tendency which it had by the burden of taxation that it laid on them, to reconcile the English to a war as the only means of getting rid of the evil. He complained of the vacillating conduct of our Government in its foreign relations; that it never seemed to know its own mind, which was constantly liable to be influenced by the state of opinion in England and by the majority of the House of Commons. He alluded to the question of the annexation of Savoy, and remarked that our Government knew that it was inevitable; that he had him-

self told Lord Cowley that it was absolutely necessary for the satisfaction of the French people, who required some return for the sacrifices they had made for the independence of Italy. He spoke of our Tory party as being just as hostile to the Bonapartes as were their predecessors of the time of the first Empire; that some of the Whig party were of a similar character. He mentioned Lord Clarendon as being a 'thorough aristocrat,' who had told him that Bright and myself were a couple of fools who thought of converting England into a Republic.

"*June* 10.—In consequence of a letter which I received from Prince Napoleon's Secretary, I called at the Palais Royal to-day, and had a conversation with the Prince. He said that the political relations of the two countries were very far from being in a satisfactory state; that he feared the Austrians were going to interfere in Naples; that he suspected they were encouraged by the confidence they had in the support of our Court and the Prince Consort, and that the English Government would not join France in preventing it. The consequence might be that the Piedmontese would interfere also, and a war would be the consequence which would compel France to take a part, or else allow the Austrians to march to Turin, which they would certainly do if they had not a French army to oppose them; that England might avert this by undertaking with her fleet to prevent an expedition from leaving Trieste; that no bloodshed could arise; and that the least England could do would be to assist France in maintaining the principle of non-intervention. He dreaded the complications that would arise, and feared that it might lead to a rupture between France and England.

"He then said he was about to mention a delicate matter, and he suggested that I ought to be appointed Ambassador to France; that this would do more than

1860. ÆT. 56. anything besides to cement the good relations between the two countries. As this was said with a good deal of emphasis, and appeared to be the communication he had in view when he sent for me, I replied, with equal emphasis, 'Impossible! you really do not understand us in England!' I then explained exactly my position towards Lord Cowley; that I had from the first been only an interloper on his domain; that he had acted with great magnanimity in tolerating my intrusion; that a man of narrow mind would have resented it, and that I felt much indebted to him for his tolerance of me, etcetera. The Prince remarked that a man of first-rate capacity ought to have resented it, and either have given up his post altogether to me, or to have resisted my encroachment on his functions. I remarked that Lord Cowley had frankly owned that I had superior knowledge to himself on questions of a commercial or economical character, and that, considering how much they had been my study, it was not derogatory to him to grant me precedence in my own specialty. I begged him to say no more upon the subject.

"*June* 14.—To-day a fête-day at Paris, a holiday, a review, flags, and illuminations. The Emperor was well received by the populace on his way from the railway to the Tuileries, and in going and coming from the Champs de Mars, where he passed in review upwards of 50,000 troops and national guards. The occasion of these demonstrations was the celebration of the annexation of Savoy and Nice to France. An acquisition of more territory is as popular with the masses here and in the United States (and would be in England if we had anything but the sea for our frontier), as in ancient times it was with despots and conquerors. The world is governed by the force of traditions, after they have lost by the change of time and circumstances all relation to the existing state of human affairs. It is only by the

greater diffusion of knowledge in the science of political economy, that men will cease to covet their neighbour's land, from the conviction that they may possess themselves of all that it produces by a much cheaper, as well as honester, process than by war and conquest. But until this time arrives, we do not insure ourselves against the conquering propensities of despotic sovereigns by transferring the supreme power to the masses of the people.

"*July* 16.—Called on Lord Cowley, and referring to a suggestion which he and M. Rouher had made that I should seek an audience with the Emperor, in order to strengthen his free-trade tendencies by my conversation with him, I alluded to the warlike preparations which had lately been going on in England, and confessed a repugnance to meeting the Emperor, to whom I had promised last November that if he entered on the path of Free-trade without reserve, it would be accepted by the English people as a proof that he meditated a policy of peace. Yet in the midst of my labours upon the details of the French tariff, in which I had every day found greater proofs of the honest intentions of the French Government, I observed a constant increase in the military preparations in England, which completely falsified my promises to the Emperor. And now we were daily threatened with a proposal for a large outlay for fortifications. I added that, if the latter scheme were announced, I should feel disinclined again to see the Emperor."

It was not long before the proposal was launched, and Cobden was perfectly prepared for it. The momentous subject of military expenditure had in truth divided Cobden's active interest with the Treaty since the beginning of the year. It had been incessantly in his mind, harassing and afflicting him. If he had been capable of faltering or despondency, it would have unnerved him for the difficult

1860. ÆT. 56. contest which he was every day waging. The financial arrangements connected with the Treaty itself, had not been carried through Parliament very smoothly. The episode of the Paper duties in the House of Lords was a curious interruption to serious business. Lord John Russell had brought in a Reform Bill, but the Prime Minister was notoriously hostile to it, and the Parliament was thoroughly Palmerstonian at heart. It was a session of confusion and cross purposes. "The House of Commons is an uncertain sea," wrote one of the most competent observers to Cobden, "soon up with any shift of the wind. It got disorganized by the proposed Reform Bill. Members were determined not to pass it, yet they dared not commit themselves to a vote against it. Delay became the watchword, and nothing was passed lest the road should be cleared for the Reform Bill. Every day the House fell deeper into disorganization, and it seemed unable to recover its balance."

In the spring and summer, the feeling in England against France had become more and more deeply coloured with suspicion and alarm. It had approached what an eminent correspondent of Cobden's called a "maniacal alarm." There was in this country, he was told, "such a resolute and one-sided determination to throw all responsibility on our neighbours, to presume the worst, to construe everything in that sense, to take credit for perfect blamelessness, as mere argument cannot surmount." It was observed by one who was himself a churchman, that among the most active promoters of the panic and the necessity for immediate preparation were the country clergy. A famous bishop went about telling a story of a Frenchman who had told him that he knew the Emperor's mind to be quite undecided whether to work with England for liberty, or to work against England for absolutism, beginning the work with an invasion. The annexation of Savoy had kindled a

fire in England which a breath of air might blow into a conflagration. 1860. Æt. 56.

The experts in foreign politics surpassed themselves in the elaborateness of their ignorance. One peer who had actually been minister for foreign affairs, gravely argued that if the annexation of Savoy should take place, the formation of a strong kingdom in the north of Italy would not be feasible, as that kingdom would be open at both extremities, by the Alps to France, and by the Mincio to Austria. The newspapers and debates teemed with foolish jargon of this kind. It is like a return to the light of day to come upon that short but most pithy speech (Mar. 2, 1860), in which the orator said that he did not want the Government to give the slightest countenance to the project of annexation, but, he exclaimed in a memorable phrase, "Perish Savoy—though Savoy will not perish and will not suffer—rather than the Government of England should be involved in enmity with the Government and people of France in a matter in which we have no concern whatever."

Unfortunately, Ministers shared the common panic. Lord Palmerston had, until the winter of 1859, been the partisan of the French Empire. He had been so ready to recognize it, that his haste involved him in a quarrel with his colleagues and the Court. He was the minister of that generation who, more than any other, had shown penetration and courage enough firmly to withstand the Germanism which Prince Albert, in natural accordance with his education and earliest sympathies, had brought into the palace. He had come into power in 1859, mainly because the people expected him to stand by the Emperor in the emancipation of Italy. But in the winter of 1859 he wrote a letter to Lord John Russell, then the Foreign Secretary, saying that though until lately he had strong confidence in the fair intentions of the Emperor towards England, yet he now began to suspect that the

1860. intention of avenging Waterloo had only lain dormant.
Ær. 56. "You may rely upon it," he said to the Duke of Somerset, "that at the bottom of his heart there rankles a deep and inextinguishable desire to humble and punish England."[4] Later than this, at the beginning of 1860, it is true that he admitted that although the Emperor differed from us about certain conditions, and the interpretation of certain conditions of the treaty of peace with Russia, yet the points in dispute were settled substantially in conformity with our views. "There is no ground," he said, "for imputing to him bad faith in his conduct towards us as allies." Notwithstanding this, the imputation of bad faith as a future possibility lay persistently in men's minds. Lord Palmerston's apprehensions were shared by all the other members of his Government, save two; they were echoed in the reverberations of ten thousand leading articles; and they were eagerly seized by a public which seems to be never so happy as when it is conjuring up dangers in which it only half believes.

Lord John Russell wrote a characteristic note to Cobden (July 3), announcing a formal notification of an article which prolonged the labours of the commission until November 1. "I hope," Lord John Russell proceeds, "that long before that time arrives, you will have completed your glorious work, and laid the foundations of such an intertwining of relations between England and France that it will not be easy to separate them. It is curious and amusing to me, who remember how Huskisson was run down for proposing a duty on silk goods so low as 30 per cent., to hear the protectionists abuse France for not having a much lower duty. My belief is that 15 per cent. will protect their chief manufactures. In the meantime I wish to see this tight little island made almost impregnable. It is the sole seat of freedom in Europe which can resist a powerful despot,

[4] Ashley's *Life of Lord Palmerston*.

and I am for 'civil and religious liberty all over the world.'" 1860. ÆT. 56.

There was one powerful man in the Cabinet who did his best to stem the dangerous tide. But though in the session of 1860 Mr. Gladstone had delighted the House and the country by the eloquence and the mastery of his budget speech of February, and by the consummate skill with which he conducted his case in the debates that followed, yet he was a long way from the commanding eminence at which he arrived afterwards when Lord Palmerston's place in the popular imagination became empty. If he had left Lord Palmerston's Government, the effect would perhaps hardly have been greater than it was when he left the Government of Sir Robert Peel in 1845, or that of Lord Palmerston himself in 1855. But the struggle in the forum of his own conscience was long and severe. He felt all the weakness of the evidence by which his colleagues justified the urgency of their suspicions and the necessity for preparation. He revolted from the frank irrationality of the common panicmonger of the street and the newspaper. As a thrifty steward he groaned over the foolish profusion with which he saw his masters flinging money out of the window. He was in very frequent correspondence with Cobden, and Cobden brought to bear upon him all his powers of persuasion, supported by a strong and accurate knowledge of all that the French Government had to show in defence of their own innocence. It is hardly too much to say that Cobden at this time subjected Mr. Gladstone to the same intense intellectual and moral pressure to which he had subjected Peel fifteen years before. But the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the spirit of Lord Palmerston's appeal to Cobden himself to come within the citadel, decided that he could do more good by remaining in the Government than by leaving it. At the close of the session, marked as it had

1860. been by more dazzling proofs than his career had ever
ÆT. 56. furnished before of eloquence and intellectual power, his position in Parliament and the country was certainly weaker than it had been six months ago.

Cobden at least was no harsh judge. At the beginning of the year, when writing to Mr. Bright about the Treaty, he had said, "I have told you before that Gladstone has shown much heart in this business. . . . . He has a strong aversion to the waste of money on our armaments. He has no class feeling about the Services. He has much more of our sympathies. It is a pity you cannot avoid hurting his convictions by such sallies as [—sally not now worth reproducing] . . He has more in common with you and me than any other man of his power in Britain." And later in the year, "I agree with you that Gladstone overworks himself. But I suspect that he has a conscience which is at times a troublesome partner for a cabinet minister. I make allowances for him, for I have never yet been able to define to my own satisfaction how far a man with a view to utility ought to allow himself to be merged in a body of men called a government, or how far he should preserve his individuality. If he goes into a government at all, he must make up his mind sometimes to compromise with his own convictions for a time, and at all events to be overborne by a majority of his colleagues."

Meanwhile, the Government insisted on what they regarded as the policy of security. On July 10, Cobden wrote to Lord Palmerston a long letter, calmly and earnestly urging reasons against a new scheme of defensive armaments. He began with a few words about the Treaty, and the date at which they might expect to end their labours. The Treaty, he said, had been the engrossing task of the French Government for the last eight months, and M. Rouher was then foregoing his autumn

holidays in order to complete the work. Cobden then goes on:—

"The systematic and resolute manner in which these reforms have been entered upon leave me no reason to doubt that the Government contemplate a complete revolution in their economical policy, which will lead to an early and large increase in the commercial intercourse of the two countries, and to an amelioration of their social and political relations. Now it is evident that this is a very different prospect from that which is generally entertained in England, where the public mind has been systematically misled, apparently with the design of effecting some temporary and sinister object. The extraordinary military and warlike displays of the last few months in England have also tended to diminish the hopes which were at first entertained in connexion with the Treaty. And this state of discouragement in the public mind has been increased by the rumour that it is the intention of the Government to propose a large increase to our permanent defences. For as this will be to commit ourselves to a future and somewhat remote expenditure, rather than to provide against a present danger, it would be tantamount to a declaration on the part of the Government that they have no faith in any ultimate advantages from the Treaty.

"It is on this point that I am more immediately led to address you. It seems to me that the two questions are intimately connected; and I venture to suggest that in fairness to the public and to Parliament, as well as to the Government itself, the result of our negotiations here should be known, before the country is pledged to a further large outlay for defensive armaments. Let it be understood that I ask merely for the delay of a few months; and I ask this on the ground that there is not only a general ignorance in England as to what the value of

1860. the Treaty is likely to be (for it cannot be known even to
ÆT. 56. myself until the French tariff is ready for publication), but that a widespread suspicion has been created that the French Government is playing an uncandid part in the negotiations. Should the Treaty prove as unsatisfactory in its details as is predicted by those who are urging us to an increase of our warlike preparations, I shall have nothing to say in opposition to such a policy. But if, as I expect, the French Government should take but a single step from their prohibition system to a tariff more liberal than that of the Zollverein or the United States, then I think the public mind in England will undergo a considerable change as to the prospects of peace with our great neighbour; and it is doubtful whether the country would, on the very eve of such a change, subject itself to increased burdens in anticipation of a rupture with its new customer. All I desire is that it should be allowed a choice when in possession of a full knowledge of these circumstances.

"There is another reason why I am induced to press this subject on your attention. It has been evident to me from the first that political considerations entered more largely than those of an economical kind into the motives which induced the Emperor to embark at this time on the career of Commercial Reform. Doubtless he was satisfied that this new policy would be ultimately advantageous to his people; but there was no necessity for immediate action, and, considering the great derangement of powerful interests, and the large amount of opposition and unpopularity involved in the change, there was nothing which invited one even so bold as himself to enter prematurely upon the task. His immediate objects were to strengthen the friendly relations of the French and English peoples, and to give the world an assurance that he did not contemplate a career of war and conquest. And I did not hesitate to assure him and his

most influential advisers that nothing would be so cordially accepted by the English people, as a proof of his pacific intentions towards them, as the adoption without reserve of a liberal commercial policy.

"It will be readily perceived that if, in addition to all that has been done, the Government should announce a great scheme of defensive armaments, and thus before my labours are completed, discredit by anticipation the political value of the Treaty, it will considerably weaken my position here. Bear in mind that the duties are not yet finally settled on any of the articles of the French tariff, every item of which has to be discussed and arranged by the plenipotentiaries, between the extreme rates of five and twenty per cent. I do not allege that the French Government will be led by the hostile bearing of England to adopt a system of retaliation in the terms of the Treaty. But in the important discussions on the details of the French tariff (and it is wholly a question of details), I shall be placed in a very disadvantageous position, and shall find myself deprived of those arguments with which I most successfully urged the adoption of the Free Trade policy, if in the meantime the present Government commits itself, and, what is still more important in the sight of France, if it be allowed to commit the Free Trade and popular party in England, to a permanent attitude of hostility and mistrust."

The answer to this weighty remonstrance was forthcoming a week after Cobden wrote it, and it came through the House of Commons. On July 23 Lord Palmerston made his speech. He introduced a resolution for constructing works for the defence of certain royal dockyards and arsenals, Dover and Portland, and for erecting a central arsenal. After speaking in general language of the horizon being darkened by clouds that betokened the possibility of a tempest, Lord Palmerston proceeded:—"The Committee of

1860. course knows that in the main I am speaking of our imme-
ÆT. 56. diate neighbours across the Channel, and there is no use in disguising it. It is in no unfriendly spirit that I am speaking. No one has any right to take offence at considerations and reflections which are purely founded upon the principles of self-defence." He admitted that he hoped much from the Treaty, but a treaty was a frail defence. It would be folly to rely on its future effects, so long as our sea frontier was vulnerable. There were, moreover, circumstances in the state of Europe leading us to think that we might soon have to defend ourselves from attack. France had an army of 600,000; of these 400,000 were actually under arms, and the remainder could be called into the ranks in a fortnight. He did not mean to say that such a host was raised for the deliberate purpose of aggression, but still the possession of power to aggress frequently inspires the will to aggress. It was not only the army that suggested these apprehensions. The navy, too, had been greatly strengthened, so that our neighbours would have the means of transporting within a very few hours a large and formidable body of troops to our shores.

Cobden's plea in reply to all this had been given by anticipation, in a postscript to the letter from which I have already quoted. "I am of course writing," he had said, "with the conviction that France has done nothing in the way of warlike preparations to justify our demonstrations in England. I have had good opportunities of satisfying myself that the most monstrous exaggerations have been current in England respecting the naval strength of this country." And this was quite true. Cobden had taken as much trouble as the responsible head of a department, or much more perhaps, to find out from visits to Nantes and elsewhere, as well as from constant conversations with the French authorities and the English naval attaché, whether

any real change in the proportion between the imperial navy and our own was taking place. He had satisfied himself that there was no evidence whatever of the alleged change. 1860. Æt. 56.

Lord Palmerston seems to have handed Cobden's letter to Lord John Russell, who wrote in reply :—

"*July* 31, 1860.

"My dear Mr. Cobden,—I infer from your last letter that you think the plan for fortifications will interfere with the arrangements of the Commercial Treaty. I cannot understand this. The Emperor wishes to defend France; he completes Cherbourg; he adopts a peace army of 600,000 men. Not a word of complaint. We add to our navy, and propose to fortify the arsenals where they are built and repaired. We are accused immediately of warlike intentions. Is it to be deliberately said that France may be armed, but that we should be unarmed? Belgium, Antwerp, Dover, Portsmouth, would in that case soon fall into French possession.

"I am anxious for the completion of the Commercial Treaty. But I cannot consent to place my country at the mercy of France.—I remain, yours very truly,

"J. Russell."

To this Cobden replied (Aug. 2, 1860) with an emphatic statement, which he often repeated in various forms, but which those who accuse him of wishing for peace at any price carefully overlook :—

"My dear Lord John Russell,—So far am I from wishing that 'we should be unarmed,' and so little am I disposed to 'place my country at the mercy of France' (to quote the language of your note), that *I would, if necessary, spend one hundred millions sterling to maintain an irresistible superiority over France at sea.* I had satisfied myself

1860. Æt. 56. that we were in this position of security, and that there was no foundation for the reports of the sudden or unusual increase of the French navy before I addressed my letter to Lord Palmerston. . . . Recollect that we had voted for our armaments for this year nearly 30,000,000*l.*, before the fortification plan was proposed. I do not see any limit to the future expenditure if, when a further increase is objected to, every existing provision is to be ignored, and we are met with the answer that, unless the additional outlay be agreed to, we shall be unarmed."

On the same day on which Cobden wrote in this way, Mr. Bright, in a speech of the highest power and sagacity, had shown equally clearly that it was not the policy of security which he opposed, but the mistaken means of carrying it out. After illustrating the almost daily advances that were taking place in the engines of war, Mr. Bright said:—"I am one of those who believe that at a time like this, when these remarkable changes are taking place, ... the course of an honest and economic government should be to go on slowly, cautiously, and inquiringly, and not commit themselves to a vast expenditure which twelve months' experience may show to be of no value at all."

If it was answered that the occasion was urgent, then Cobden's rejoinder by anticipation in his letter to Lord Palmerston was perfectly good, namely, that the expenditure on fortifications was remote and spread over a number of years, and therefore could hardly be designed to meet an immediate and pressing danger. Lord Palmerston's speech we now see, at the distance of a score of years, to have been a dangerous provocation to Napoleon instantly to make the very descent for which we declared ourselves to be unprepared. If Napoleon had really cherished the bitter design of avenging Waterloo, of which Lord Palmerston suspected

him, he would not have waited for the completion of the fortifications. The effect in Paris was what Cobden had foreseen, as the entries in his journals testify. 1860. Ær. 56.

"July 25.—Called on Lord Cowley, and in the course of conversation expressed my disapproval of Lord Palmerston's project for fortifying the British coasts at the expense of ten or twelve millions sterling. I also censured the tone of his speech in alluding to France as the probable aggressor upon England. The scheme and the speech were a mockery and insult to me, whilst engaged in framing the Treaty of Commerce; and I frankly avowed that if I had not my heart in the business in which I was engaged here, I would return home and do the utmost in my power to destroy the Ministry, and thus prevent it from committing the popular party to the policy of the present Government. He admitted that Lord Palmerston's speech was injudicious in having alluded so exclusively to the danger to be apprehended from France.

"July 26.—Lord Palmerston's speech in the House of Commons has produced considerable emotion in the political circles of Paris. The proposal to spend nine millions on fortifications has occasioned less offence than the speech which accompanied it, wherein he directed the apprehensions of the country towards France exclusively as the source of our danger of attack and invasion. People speak of it as an indication that our Court and aristocracy are inclined to renew the policy of 1792, by forming another coalition in opposition to France. They say that the inspiration of our policy in arming and fortifying comes from Berlin and Brussels through the British Court.

"July 28.—Dined with Mr. P—— and a party at the restaurant of Philippe. M. Chevalier, one of the company, told me a curious story about a recent interview between M. Thouvenel, the French Foreign Minister, and Lord

1860. Cowley. The latter, after confessing some perplexity in
ÆT. 56. making the communication, informed the former that Lord Palmerston had obtained from some person in the secret a copy of the plan of the Emperor for seizing on London! He had also procured from a similar source the information that the Emperor had entered into an arrangement with Cavour, by which France was to secure a further aggrandizement of territory. Both stories were received as laughably untrue. M. Chevalier says there are *chevaliers d'industrie* who manufacture these marvellous stories, and sell them to newspapers or to credulous statesmen. Both the above *canards* had, he said, been sold to Lord Palmerston and by him been transferred to his colleagues of the Cabinet.

"*August* 2.—In a conversation with M. Rouher, the Minister of Commerce, he related to me the incident, mentioned previously by M. Chevalier, of Lord Cowley having called on M. Thouvenel, the Foreign Minister, to ask for an explanation respecting a secret treaty alleged to have been entered into by France and Sardinia, by which the latter was to be allowed to annex the whole of the Italian States on the condition of ceding to the French Emperor another slice of territory. He described in a graphic way the embarrassment of the British envoy in disclosing the delicate object of his visit; how, after many shrugs and wry faces, and sundry exhortations from the French Minister, he at last revealed the secret; how this was followed by an earnest disavowal, on the personal honour of M. Thouvenel, upon which, after many fresh protestations of regret and perplexity, Lord Cowley produced from his pocket a copy of the Treaty, which he handed to the French Minister, who thereupon laughed heartily, and assured him that it was not worth the paper on which it was written, and that in fact the English Government had been the victim of a very clumsy hoax.

"M. Rouher spoke in indignant terms of the speech 1860.
lately delivered by Lord Palmerston in the House of Commons when introducing the measure for fortifying the naval arsenals, in which he founded his scheme entirely upon the danger to be apprehended from France. He characterized the policy of our Cabinet as a pitiful truckling to the popular passions of the moment, for the sole object of securing a majority in Parliament, in disregard of the interests of commerce and civilization and the higher duties of statesmanship. He spoke at some length and with much eloquence on this subject, and remarked that he regretted there was not a tribune in France from which he could speak for half an hour in answer to Lord Palmerston. He said that this speech had increased the difficulties of the French Government in carrying out liberally the terms of the Treaty, for it deprived them of the argument that it would ameliorate the moral and political relations of the two countries. He denied the truth of Lord Palmerston's assertion that the French navy had been unduly increased. Alluding to the letter which the Emperor had written to Count Persigny in consequence of Lord Palmerston's speech, he remarked that it had wounded the susceptibilities of the French people, who dislike to see their sovereign treat with so much consideration, and so much on the footing of equality, a statesman who had recently offered so many insults to France. I hear from many other quarters that the Emperor's letter has hurt the self-love of all classes of the French people. It is a significant fact that it has not been published in the *Moniteur*.

"*August* 27.—Called on M. Rouher in the morning and had some conversation on the subject of our proposed arrangements for completing the French tariff. He mentioned that he had been speaking to Lord Clarendon upon the language used by Lord Palmerston in the House of

1860. Commons, and had censured the levity with which he had
Æt. 56. for mere momentary objects in the House embittered the relations of the two countries and endangered their peace. He observed that the conduct of Lord Palmerston had added immensely to the difficulties of the French government in carrying out the details of the Treaty, for it had cut from under their feet the political grounds on which they had justified themselves to the influential members of the protectionist party, who now taunted him with having failed to secure the English alliance by the Free-Trade concessions. He said that the Emperor's letter to M. Persigny was not intended for publication, but that the Emperor was importuned by the latter to allow it to be given to the world.

"*August* 31.—Called on Prince Napoleon, who informed me he was going shortly on a visit to England, where he would study our agriculture, and travel into Scotland as far as Inverness. I hoped he would visit Manchester and Liverpool, and make a speech on the Commercial Treaty. He complained of the language of Lord Palmerston in the House towards France, and intimated that it would be well for the peace of the world that he were removed from the political stage, if not from the stage of life. He said the great danger to be dreaded from these attacks upon France, made by our leading statesmen from political motives, was lest the Germans, and particularly Austria, should infer that they would be supported in a war with France by England, and thus be encouraged to make a rupture with this country. He attributed our present hostile attitude towards France to the influence exercised at our Court by the royal families of Prussia, Belgium, etc. The English Court, he said, in the present equally balanced state of parties, exercised a great sway over the rival aristocratic candidates for office.

"*September* 4.—Lord Granville called, and I took the opportunity of commenting on the conduct of the Govern-

ment during the late session of Parliament, particularly with regard to Lord Palmerston's gratuitous attacks on France in his speech on proposing the project of fortifications. I showed the enormous superiority which we already possessed at sea before the expenditure on coast defences was proposed, that we had 84,000 men and boys voted for our navy against 30,000 in France; that our expenditure was 15,000,000*l.* and theirs 6,000,000*l.*

"*September* 5.—M. de Persigny (French Ambassador to London) dined with me, and we had a long conversation upon the politics of the two countries. I referred to the report that the Emperor had ordered eight more *frégates blindées* to be built, which he seemed to admit to be true, and I expressed an opinion that it would only lead to our building double as many iron-cased line-of-battle ships in England. I added that this could only lead to an indefinite expense on both sides, and that unless an end could be put to this insane rivalry it would lead to a war. I said I blamed the French Government for taking the initiative in these matters, which he did not appear able to meet. He agreed that it would be necessary to endeavour to bring the two governments to an understanding by which some limit could be put to this warlike rivalry. He expressed an opinion that it would be left to a Tory government to carry out this policy. He complained of the levity with which Lord Palmerston trifled with the peace of the two countries; and he spoke of the difficulties which he encountered in his relations with our Government, owing to the want of a consistent and reliable policy on the part of the Ministry, who altered their course to suit the caprice of the House of Commons from day to day."

Meanwhile, the fabric of a tariff was slowly rising out of space. In September, a storm ruffled the surface of Cobden's diplomacy. The new rates of duty on iron and other metal

1860. wares in the French tariff were to come into operation on
ÆT. 56. the 1st of October. Cobden had been holding daily conferences with M. Rouher for settling the necessary alterations in the tariff, and was at length (Sept. 10) able to report that the work was nearly completed. Lord Cowley expressed a wish to take instructions from home before he signed the convention. In vain Cobden pointed out to him the impossibility of revising the French tariff in London without the assistance of the French Ministers, and the Ministers would certainly not go over the matter again. At that moment, moreover, the heads of departments were absent from London, and a most embarrassing and dangerous delay would necessarily take place in consequence. Lord Cowley did not feel that he could give way, and a copy of the tariff was sent home. When the tariff reached London, the Foreign Office hesitated to accept the figures without reference in detail to the Treasury, the Customs, and the Board of Trade. It was true that both the Board of Trade and the Customs had sent their representatives to supervise the proceedings in Paris. It was clearly explained to the Foreign Office how impossible it would be to revise a French tariff in London. The President of the Board of Trade was away in his yacht, and nobody knew where to find him. In the meanwhile his department had written to the Foreign Office, deprecating as useless, if not mischievous, any attempt to revise the French tariff in London, and advising that it should be accepted as it left the hands of the Commission in Paris. "The Board of Trade," said one of its Presidents, "is merely an opinion-giving department, and our advice is often disregarded, *especially when it is right.*" It was disregarded now, and the tariff remained hung up in the most stubborn of all the Circumlocution offices. The first day of October was rapidly approaching. The French Ministers were astonished at a

delay which was unintelligible. "I am amazed," M. Rouher said to Cobden, "that a country like England should allow a great commercial question to be treated in this contemptuous way. Had it been Caraccas or Guayaquil or Turkey, I should have understood it. But here is a Treaty of Commerce between England and a nation of thirty-six millions of people within two hours of its shores—probably the greatest event in her commercial annals—and it does not seem to create sufficient interest in the Government to induce the President of the Board of Trade to remain for a few days at his post, or even to leave his address where a despatch will find him." He added that he had some reason to believe that perhaps there would be no great regret in some quarters, if Cobden did not meet with too great success in his negotiations. Success might procure for him a degree of influence that might, it was feared, possibly be used against the Government.

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Cobden suggested to M. Rouher that if they could only sign such a portion of the tariff as was to come into operation on the 1st of October, they might at least publish the whole tariff, on the ground that the first portion was likely to be the least satisfactory to the English manufacturers, and it was unadvisable therefore to expose it to hostile criticism for a week or ten days before the rest could be published. When this was explained at the next meeting of the plenipotentiaries, a rather disagreeable scene took place. "Lord Cowley," says Cobden, "jumped up from his chair and, seizing his hat, declared with considerable excitement that he would leave the room, throw up all responsibility, and leave the matter in my hands; that I had undertaken to act without his consent, and in opposition to his instructions, etcetera. In vain M. Rouher explained that he had acted on my personal assurance, and that what I had said did not bind me as a plenipotentiary, and still less Lord

1860. Cowley. The whole scene ended in Lord Cowley refusing
ÆT. 56. to sign the whole of the tariff on metals, and so we appended our signatures only to that portion which comes into operation on October 1." This, it should be said here, was the only occasion when any difference arose between Cobden and the English ambassador. "Do not say a word," he had written to Mr. Bright a few weeks before, "to disparage Lord Cowley. He has acted a very manly part, and has done his best to help me."

The continued delay as to the text of the Convention chafed Cobden almost beyond endurance. "When the post of plenipotentiary was conferred on me, without my solicitation," he writes in his diary, "I little thought that it would subject me to feelings of humiliation. Yet this has been the case during the last week; for I find that I am paraded at meetings of the plenipotentiaries with my hands tied, without the power of solving the merest question of detail. When I filled the post of commercial traveller at the age of twenty, I was entrusted with more discretionary power than is now shared by Lord Cowley and myself while filling the office of H.M.'s plenipotentiaries. The name might more appropriately be changed to that of nullipotentiary. The points on which this delay is created by the Foreign Office, are so trivial and unimportant as almost to defy comprehension. It fairly raises the suspicion whether there be not an occult influence at work at home, unfavourable to my success, and which would not grieve even if I were to fail in my Treaty altogether, or to abandon the undertaking in weariness and disgust."

The suspicion that his labours were not popular with the Cabinet was undoubtedly well founded, but in this particular instance Cobden was probably only suffering from that jealous and surly spirit which the Foreign Office thinks businesslike. Lord Cowley wrote to him good-

naturedly:—"You will not bless the day when you made acquaintance with diplomacy. But as you have now got entangled in our meshes, you must take us as we are, for better, for worse." The truth seems to be that Lord Palmerston, who knew little or nothing of the merits of the matter, thought in a general way that official form or the national dignity required that a certain number of objections should be raised. Mr. Milner Gibson was compelled to hurry down to Broadlands, to prove by word of mouth to the Prime Minister that they were wasting time in mere strawsplitting. The Foreign Office held out upon the following point. If an importer were proved to have made a declaration of value to the amount of ten per cent. under the real value, he should be liable to penalties. No, our Government said, ten per cent. is not margin enough: the importer must not be punished unless his under-declaration should amount to fifteen per cent. on the real value. In fact, this was only making things a little easier for dishonest men. M. Rouher said that he would accept the alteration if it were pressed, but that it would disincline him for the adoption of further *ad valorem* duties. This was explained to Lord Cowley, and after an interchange of telegrams, the alteration was abandoned.

It was October 12 before the first supplementary convention was signed, fixing the duty on work in metals. The second supplementary convention, embracing the remainder of the French tariff, was signed on November 16. On this day the labours of the Treaty came to an end. Cobden summed up his grievances in the following passage in his journal, referring immediately to the earlier of the two conventions, but substantially conveying his impressions of the performance as a whole:—

"This convention was ready for signature, so far as the negotiation *here* was concerned, on the 18th September, and

1860. the delay which has taken place is attributable to our
ÆT. 56. Foreign Office, to their habitual procrastination, the desire to meddle, and I fear also to the willingness on the part of some of the officials in that department to find fault with *my* performance. My position is that of a poacher, and their feeling towards me is akin to that of gamekeepers towards a trespasser in quest of game. I am afraid, too, that the majority of the Cabinet is not very eager for my complete success here. The tone of our Court is very hostile to the French Emperor, and in the present nearly-balanced state of political parties the Court has great influence. There is an instinctive feeling on the part of our aristocratic politicians that if the Treaty should prove successful, and result in a largely increased trade between France and England, it would produce a state of feeling which might lead to a mutual limitation of armaments, and thus cut down the expenditure for our warlike services on which our aristocratic system flourishes. The first attempt at delaying the Treaty, and perhaps detracting from my merit in its preparation, was the proposal to revise again the tariff in England; and when I had proved the absurdity and impossibility of doing this, and had induced them to leave it precisely as I had sent it home, then the Foreign Office officials fell upon the *text* of the convention, and by insisting on certain alterations produced a further delay. The attempt to substitute fifteen for ten per cent. for the amount of undervaluation which should subject importers to a fine, and other attempted changes in this part of the convention, whilst they caused a further postponement, were calculated to weaken my influence with the French Minister by revoking an engagement to which I had become a party. These points have at last been most unwillingly yielded, after occasioning me great trouble and annoyance. The clause which I had agreed to for regulating the duty on sugar was

rejected, though it was proposed merely for the convenience 1860.
of the French Minister in controlling his own producers, and ÆT. 56.
could not possibly be prejudicial to our interests. The clause also respecting the Visa of French Consuls in England was altered at the Foreign Office, with no other practical result than to give needless offence to the French negotiators, and M. Herbet, one of the Commissioners, pronounced it to be very '*blessant.*' Altogether the spirit which animates the officials at home is very hostile and mistrustful to the French Government; and it is evident that, whilst this spirit lasts, it is quite impossible that any negotiation between the two Governments, with a view to limit their respective armaments, can be entered on with any chance of success."

In November Mr. Bright came to Paris to pay his friend a short visit. "I cannot allow you to leave Paris," he had written, "to go south to Algiers, or Egypt, or even to Cannes or Nice, without trying to have an evening or two with you." The day after his arrival they called on Prince Napoleon, who told them that the English Government ought to invite the Emperor to bring away his troops from Rome. According to Prince Napoleon, England could not do the French Government a greater service. On the following day they saw the Emperor himself.

"*Nov.* 27.—Mr. Bright and I had an audience of the Emperor. He asked if I was satisfied with the Treaty, and I replied that, with the exception of the article of iron, I did not complain. I told him that if iron had been taken last instead of the first item in the tariff, it would have been dealt with more boldly. He intimated that greater reductions would follow. He expressed to Mr. Bright his high sense of the course he had taken in always trying to preserve a good understanding between the two countries. He again complained (as he had done before to me) that his

1860. intentions towards England were misrepresented by certain

Æt. 56. people. He laughed at the reports that he was preparing some boats for the invasion of England, when it turned out they were intended to carry coals from the interior to Brest. He alluded to the conduct of an English lady, and said he had a letter written by her to M——, saying, 'Will nobody be found to shoot that rascal?' meaning the Emperor. He alluded to the affairs of Italy, and seemed to be especially puzzled what to do with the Pope. In reference to Venetia, he said he had suggested to Mr. —— that a pamphlet should be written recommending that Austria should sell the independence of that Italian province for a sum of money. In the course of our conversation he mentioned as a secret that he had bought the *Chronicle*, London newspaper, and he offered to put it into Bright's and my hands, to be under our control.[5] I parried this proposal by saying that such arrangements could never be kept secret, and I rather surprised him by saying that I had heard some months since of his having bought that newspaper."

This interview had been sought by the Emperor's visitors from no idle motives. Most of the hour was taken up with the subject of passports. The two Englishmen had come there to bring arguments to bear which should induce the Emperor to abolish this troublesome restraint on the intercourse of nations. It naturally followed as a part of the policy on which France had entered in the Treaty; and the Emperor felt that the persuasion of his visitors could not be logically resisted. This proved to be another instance of the value of the informal diplomacy of reasonable and enlightened men. Mr. Bright was struck by the great confidence which Napoleon seemed to feel in Cobden, and by the degree in which his mind was open to argument. After

[5] Mr. Bright does not recollect that the Emperor said he had bought the *Chronicle*, but that he had secured an influence in it or over it.

Mr. Bright returned to England, Cobden persevered with the good work. 1860. Æt. 56.

"*December* 6.—Dined at M. Chevalier's. Met Count de Persigny, who has just returned from the Embassy to England and entered on the duties of Home Minister. We spoke upon the subject of passports. I mentioned to him the conversation I had had with the Emperor when Mr. Bright and I had an audience with him. He (Count P.) seemed inclined to put an end to the present system of passports between France and England, and to substitute a mere visiting card, which should receive the stamp from the consular agent at the port of embarkation, and which should serve as a ticket of admission into France. Although admitting that this would be an improvement on the present system, I advised him to make a clean sweep of all travelling permits, and to content himself with a police surveillance when a person became settled; I said that a *billet de séjour* might be required to be taken out by all Englishmen who took up their abode in any part of France."

Two days later Cobden wrote a letter to Persigny, now become Minister of the Interior, urging many reasons why he ought to abolish passports without substituting any other precaution in their place. The abolition of passports with regard to British subjects was passed a week later (December 16). Some of the English newspapers chose to say that the change had been made at the intercession of the Empress, who was delighted at the manner in which she had been treated in England. "The passport reform," Cobden wrote to Mr. Bright, "is capital. To-day, Chevalier writes to say that the French postmaster is prepared to increase the weight of letters, and I am writing by this post to Rowland Hill to say that he has only to make the proposal. Thus in the same year we have the tariff, abolition of passports, and a

1860. postal facility. The question arises naturally, why should
ÆT. 56. not our Foreign Office accomplish some good of this kind? I do not want to throw any blame on Lord Cowley, but can it be doubted that much more of the same kind might be done if there was a will?"

This letter to Persigny was Cobden's last act before leaving Paris. On the 9th of December, accompanied by his wife and eldest daughter, he left Paris on his way to Algiers. He had never quite shaken off the effects of the illness which had attacked him in the previous winter. He used to say of himself that he was wholly the creature of atmosphere and temperature. His throat was constantly troublesome, and when cold and damp weather came, his hoarseness returned with growing severity. He had a nervous dread of the London fog, from which he had suffered the autumn before, and from which he was suffering even now, and he had an irresistible craving for the sunshine of the warm south. His doctor warned him that a single speech to a large audience might destroy his voice for ever; and he was beset with invitations to public meetings and congratulatory banquets. We cannot wonder at his eagerness for rest. "When I began last winter," he wrote to a friend, "as a volunteer in the corps of diplomacy, I little dreamed what a year's work I was preparing for myself. Certainly mine has not been an idle life, but I never had so tough a task in hand as that which I have just finished. And much as my heart was in the work, I feel intensely satisfied that it is at an end. Nor do I think, if I must confess so much, that I could again go through the ordeal. It would not be easy to explain to you what it has been, but if I should again have the pleasure of toasting my knees by your fire, I could explain it in a few sittings."[6]

He remained in Algiers until the following May. While

[6] *To William Hargreaves. Nov. 16, 1860.*

he was absent, his friends began to talk about some public recognition of his services by the Government. The Tariff had been received with almost universal approval in the various centres of English industry. Manchester, after a day or two of hesitation, pronounced at last a decided verdict. In spite of some difficulty about drills, the linen-men of Belfast were well pleased. The slate people and the leather people frankly declared that the new duties were all that they could desire. Bradford and Leeds, Nottingham and Leicester, rose to enthusiasm. The London newspapers, it is true, were nearly all silent, but the great merchants and manufacturers all over the country were thoroughly awake to the volume of wealth which the Treaty would pour into Great Britain. They asked one another whether, while grants of money were always lavished on men who achieved successes in war, the Government could leave unnoticed a man who had just achieved so vast a success in the field of industry and peace. As a matter of fact, the authorities of the Foreign Office, it is said, did not even pass the account of the mere expenses of the Commission, a sum of little more than 3000*l.* in all, without much ungracious demur. There was a rumour that a vote of money to Cobden would be submitted to the House, but it is believed that the Government declined the suggestion. It was customary, as it seemed, to make presents of money to military men for doing their duty, but there was no precedent for offering such a reward to volunteer diplomatists. Cobden's friends probably answered that there was no precedent for his disinterested labour. What his own mind was upon this subject is seen in the following letter to Mr. Bright:—

"*Algiers, 4 Feb.,* 1861.

"If there be the slightest whisper in any quarter of proposing to *vote* me any money for the work I did in Paris, I

1861. rely on your putting a stop to it. Whether such an idea
ÆT. 57. ever occurred to a member of the Government I should doubt. But kind and officious friends have suggested it. I repeat, from whatever quarter it may be spoken of, I rely on your representing my feelings and determination by preventing its being publicly advocated, or, if so, by declining it in my name. It is bad enough to have neglected one's affairs till I am obliged to see something of this sort done privately for my family. But the *two* processes would be intolerable.

"Besides, if there were no other motive, I do not wish to allow the *Government* to be my paymaster, for a totally different reason. The conduct of the head of the Government during my negotiations was so outrageously inconsistent, so insulting to myself in the position in which I was placed, so calculated to impede the work I had in hand, and to render it almost impossible for the French Government to fulfil its intentions, that, as I told Lord Cowley, if my heart had not been in my work, I should have thrown up my powers and gone home. I allude, of course, to Lord Palmerston's speech on the fortification scheme, and to his still worse one, if possible, just before the close of Parliament. If I had done justice to myself, I should have put on public record in a formal despatch my opinion of this conduct, which threw ridicule and mockery on my whole proceedings. But I was restrained solely by a regard for the cause in which I was engaged. I was afraid that the real motive was to prevent my completing the work, and was cautious therefore not to give any good ground for quarrelling with me and recalling me.

"To form a fair judgment of this reckless levity and utter want of dignity or decency on the part of the Prime Minister, just turn to the volumes of the Life of the first Lord Auckland, who was sent by Pitt to negotiate the Commercial

Treaty with France in 1786. I have not seen the book, but I can tell you what you will not find in its pages: you will not read that in the midst of those negotiations Pitt rose in the House and declared that he apprehended danger of a sudden and unprovoked attack on our shores by the French king; that (whilst history told us that we had 84,000 men voted for our navy to the 31,000 in France, and whilst we had 150,000 riflemen assembled for drill) he, Mr. Pitt, pursued the eccentric course of proposing that the nation should spend ten millions on fortifications, and that he accompanied this with speeches in the House in which he imputed treacherous and unprovoked designs upon us on the part of the monarch with whom his own plenipotentiary was then negotiating a treaty of commerce in Paris. On the contrary, you will find Pitt consistently defending, in all its breadth and moral bearings, his peaceful policy, and it is the most enduring title to fame that he left in all his public career.[7]

[7] Cobden was justified in the contrast on which he insisted between Pitt's relations with Eden, and Lord Palmerston's treatment under similar circumstances. The Auckland Correspondence (i. 86—122) shows that Pitt entered into the details of the project which he had initiated, with the liveliest zeal and interest. Oddly enough, in the course of the negotiations, suspicions arose in England of the sincerity of the French Government on the same grounds as were discovered in 1860—the alleged increase of the French navy, and a royal visit to Cherbourg, which was supposed to mean mischief to Portsmouth and Plymouth. Eden, however, like Cobden, insisted that at Versailles there was every appearance of a belief that Great Britain and France ought to unite in some solid plan of permanent peace—though Eden, unlike Cobden, laid down the general proposition that "it is difficult to feel confident in the sincerity of any foreign court." The English papers embarrassed the Government by their demand for the destruction of Cherbourg, but Pitt kept a cool head, along with his firm hand, in the difficult negotiations which followed the Commercial Treaty.

In defending the Treaty, Pitt made the declaration which caused him to be taunted with his degeneracy from the spirit of Chatham: "I shall not hesitate to contend against the too-frequently expressed opinion that France is, and must be, the unalterable enemy of England. My mind revolts from this position as monstrous and impossible. To suppose that any nation can be unalterably the enemy of another is weak and childish." Fox, unluckily for the wholeness of his reputation, insisted on imputing sinister motives to France in the Treaty negotiations.

1861. "Yet he had far stronger grounds for suspecting the
ÆT. 57. French king of hostile designs, or of feeling resentment towards him, for we had only three years previously closed a disastrous war with our American colonies, whose successful revolt was greatly the result of the unwarrantable assistance rendered to them by the French Government. On the other hand, Palmerston had not one hostile act *towards us* to allege against the sovereign with whom I was, with his sanction, engaged in negotiating the Treaty. The whole affair is so shockingly gross and offensive to serious minds, that, unless we are to degenerate to a nation of political mountebanks, it cannot be much longer tolerated that we are to be governed and represented by such persons."

The Government proposed no vote of money, but they did not intend to leave the negotiator of the Treaty without honourable recognition. While he was in Algiers, Cobden received the following letter from the Prime Minister:—

"94, *Piccadilly*, 26 *March*, 1861.

"MY DEAR MR. COBDEN,—The Queen being desirous of marking the sense she entertains of the public service rendered by you during the long and laborious negotiations in which you were engaged on the subject of the Commercial Treaty with France, her Majesty has authorized me to offer to you either to be created a Baronet, or to be made a Privy Councillor, whichever of the two would be most agreeable to you.

"I am aware that you might not perhaps attach any great intrinsic value to distinctions of this kind, but as an acknowledgment of public services they would not fail to be appreciated.

"My dear Mr. Cobden, yours sincerely,

"PALMERSTON.

"I hope your health has derived all the benefit you desired from the milder winter climate of Algeria. You have at all events escaped the severest English winter upon record."

To this Cobden made the reply that might have been, and probably was, anticipated :—

"*Algiers*, 13*th April*, 1861.

"MY DEAR LORD PALMERSTON,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 26th March, which reached me yesterday only, on my return after an absence of ten days from Algiers. Whilst entertaining the same sentiment of gratitude towards the Queen which I could have felt if I had accepted the offer you have been so good as to make me in her name, I must beg permission most respectfully to deny myself the honour which her Majesty has graciously proposed to confer on me. An indisposition to accept a title being in my case rather an affair of feeling than of reason, I will not dwell further on the subject.

"With respect, however, to the particular occasion for which it is proposed to confer on me this distinction, I may say that it would not be agreeable to me to accept a recompense in any form for my recent labours in Paris. The only reward I desire is to live to witness an improvement in the relations of the two great neighbouring nations which have been brought into more intimate connexion by the Treaty of Commerce.

"I remain, my dear Lord Palmerston,

"Yours sincerely,

"R. COBDEN.

"In reply to your kind inquiry, I may say that my health has derived much benefit from the beautiful summer weather which I have had the good fortune to experience

1861. here. The winter has been exceptionally fine with us,
ÆT. 57. whilst it seems to have been unusually severe in England."

No other course could have been reconcilable with Cobden's pure and simple type of citizenship. To him the service was its own reward. The whole system of decoration was alien to the antique and homely spirit of his patriotism. He never used great words about such things, nor spoke bitterly of those who coveted and prized them. On one occasion Mr. Gladstone, not long after the conclusion of the Treaty, invited him to one of his official state dinners. "To tell you the truth," Cobden replied, "I have never had the courage to get a court costume; and as I do not like being singular by coming in ordinary dress, I will beg you to excuse me." There were no heroics about him in encountering these trifling symbols of a social ordering with which he did not sympathize. He merely practised, almost without claiming it, the right of living his own plain life, and satisfying his own ideals of civic self-respect.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE POLICY OF THE COMMERCIAL TREATY.

It will be convenient to insert here a few short remarks on the general character of the work that Cobden had now accomplished. We shall find that under a different form it must still be regarded as an extension of the same principles which had inspired his first great effort. It was one more move in the direction of free exchange. By many prominent men, indeed, at the time, and by many more afterwards, the Treaty was regarded as an infraction of sound economic principles. Some came to this opinion from lack of accuracy, but more from a failure in copiousness of thought. One or two of those who had been with Cobden in the van of the assault on the Corn Laws, now looked askance on a transaction which savoured of the fallacy of reciprocity. Those rigid adherents of economics who insist, in Mill's phrase, on treating their science as if it were a thing not to guide our judgment, but to stand in its place, denounced the doctrine of treaties as a new-fangled heresy. Even the old Protectionists professed a virtuous alarm at an innovation on the principles of Free Trade.

The discussion of 1860 did little more than reproduce a discussion that had taken place seventeen years before. When Sir Robert Peel entered office, he found four sets of negotiations pending for commercial treaties, between England and France, Portugal, Spain, and Brazil. Those

1860. with France were obviously the most important. Affairs
ÆT. 56. in Syria had interrupted them, but Peel resumed the negotiations. He was most anxious for a Tariff Treaty. "I should not," he said, as Pitt had said before him, and as Cobden and Mr. Gladstone said after him, "estimate the advantage of an extended commercial intercourse with France merely in respect to the amount of pecuniary gain; but I value that intercourse on account of the effect it is calculated to produce in promoting the feelings of amity and goodwill between two great nations. I should regard that mutual intercourse in commercial affairs as giving an additional security for the permanent maintenance of peace."[1] Unfortunately, the negotiations fell through. Guizot said that he could not pass any such measure through the Chambers. Nor was there better success in other quarters.

In 1843, Mr. J. L. Ricardo had introduced a resolution in the House of Commons, declaring the inexpediency of postponing remissions of duty with a view of making such remissions a basis of commercial negotiations. This was a reply from the pure economic party to Peel's statement already quoted (see above, p. 240), that he did not reduce the wine duties because he hoped to make them the instruments of treaties with foreign countries. Ricardo prefaced his resolution by a speech, which was very able, but which pressed for Free Trade without delay, restriction, or qualification. The only process to which they need resort against hostile tariffs was to open the ports. Mr. Gladstone answered Ricardo by the same arguments that were afterwards used to defend his own policy in 1860. Mr. Disraeli, not at all disclaiming Free Trade as a general policy, supported Mr. Gladstone against the ultra-Free-Traders in a speech remarkable to this day for its large and comprehensive survey of the whole field of

[1] April 25, 1843.

our commerce, and for its discernment of the channels in which it would expand. On the immediate question, Mr. Disraeli gave a definite opinion in support of the Minister. "In forming connexions with the states of Europe," he said, "it was obvious that we could only proceed by negotiations. Diplomacy stepped in to weigh and adjust contending interests, to obtain mutual advantages, and ascertain reciprocal equivalents. Our commerce with Europe could only be maintained and extended by treaties."[1]

Cobden supported Ricardo's motion, not on the rather abstract grounds of the mover and others, but because it was a way of preventing a Government "which was the creature of monopoly, from meddling with any of our commercial arrangements." The envoy to Brazil, he said, had been sent out to obtain the best terms for the West Indian sugar monopolists, and he quoted the description by a Brazilian senator, of the people of Great Britain as the slaves of a corn, sugar, coffee, and timber oligarchy.

Was it fit, Cobden asked, that the executive government should be allowed to go all over the world to seek for impediments to Free Trade abroad, in order to excuse them in resisting the removal of impediments at home? It might be very well to talk of a commercial treaty with Portugal, but abolish the monopolies of sugar, corn, and coffee, and the vast continents of North and South America would be opened to the manufactures of Great Britain. Characteristically enough, he kept close to the immediate and particular bearings of the discussion, and nothing was said by him in 1843 that was inconsistent with his position in 1860. Ricardo, again, in 1844 brought forward a resolution to the effect that our commercial intercourse with foreign nations would be best promoted by regulating our own

[1] Feb. 14, 1843. "Sign the treaty of commerce with France," Mr. Disraeli cried, "that will give present relief."

1860. customs duties as might be best suited to our own interests,
Æt. 56. without reference to the amount of duties which foreign powers might think expedient to levy on British goods. The discussion was very meagre, and the House was counted out.

To return to the Treaty of 1860. Cobden, unable to be present to defend his measure in the House of Commons, took up the points of the case against it in a letter to Mr. Bright:—

"I observe that some of the recent converts to Free Trade, who gave you and me so much trouble to convert *them*, are concerned at our doing anything so unsound as to enter into a Commercial Treaty. I will undertake that there is not a syllable on our side of the Treaty that is inconsistent with the soundest principles of Free Trade. We do not propose to reduce a duty which, on its own merits, ought not to have been dealt with long ago. We give no concessions to France which do not apply to all other nations. We leave ourselves free to lay on any amount of internal duties, and to put on an equal tax on foreign articles of the same kind at the Custom House. It is true we bind ourselves, for ten years, not otherwise to raise such of our customs as affect the French trade, or put on fresh ones; and this, I think, no true Free Trader will regret.

"And here I may suggest, that if you observe the members on the Opposition side averse to parting with the power of putting on higher customs duties on these articles of French origin, it may be well to read them a lesson on the impossibility of their being able to lay any further burdens on commerce in future, and to remind them that if they sanction higher expenditure, they must expect to pay it in a direct income tax. Public opinion, without any French Treaty, is daily tending to this result.

"There being no objection on the ground of principle, there are, and will be, many specious arguments resorted to by those who really at heart have no sympathy for a cordial

union between the two nations, for defeating or marring the projected Treaty. Of course these fallacies you will easily deal with. I observe they often answer themselves. For instance, in the same breath, we are told that we have emptied our budget and given everything to France *already*, and then that we are going *now* to give everything and receive nothing. Then we are told that it is very wrong to reduce the duties on French wines, *because* France is going to lower the duties on British iron; and in the same breath are reproached for including Spain and Portugal in our 'concessions,' without obtaining anything in return! I am really half inclined to share your suspicions that there are influences at work, hostile to any policy which shall put an end to the present state of armed hostility and suspicion between France and England. God forgive me if I do any body of men the injustice of attributing to them wrongfully such an infernal policy. It is, perhaps, hardly consciously that anybody would pursue such a course.

"But surely, if people wished to see the relations of the two countries improved, they would never attempt to impede the only sure means of attaining that end by such frivolous objections. These people seem to think that Free Trade in France can be carried by a logical, orderly, methodical process, without resorting to stratagem, or anything like an indirect proceeding. They forget the political plots and contrivances, and the fearful adjuncts of starvation, which were necessary for carrying similar measures in England. They forget how Free Trade was wrested from the reluctant majorities of both our Houses of Parliament. Surely Louis Napoleon has as good a right, and may plead as strong motives of duty, for cheating (if I may use the word) the majorities of his Senate into an honest policy, as Peel had in dealing with the House of Lords. The Emperor of the French was elected by the whole people, not only to ad-

1860. minister their laws, but to *legislate* for them. They do not
Æt. 56. expect, as we do in England, to initiate reforms. They look for amelioration from above. When speaking with the Emperor, he observed to me that the protected interests were organized, and the general public was not; and, therefore, the contest was as unequal as between a disciplined regiment and a mob. The answer was obvious: 'Your Majesty is the organization of the masses.' And I am earnestly of opinion that he is now acting under this impulse and conviction."

The direct effects of the Treaty upon the exchange of products between England and France have been too palpable to be denied. In 1858 the total exports from England to France amounted to no more than nine million pounds, and the imports from France to thirteen millions. Nineteen years later, in 1877, the British exports and re-exports had risen from nine to twenty-five million pounds, and the imports from France to forty-five millions.

The indirect effects of the Treaty were less plainly visible, but they cannot be left out of account if we seek to view the Treaty policy as a whole. England cleared her tariff of protection, and reduced the duties which were retained for purposes of revenue on the two French staples of wine and brandy. France, on her part, replaced prohibition by a system of moderate duties. If this had been all, it might have been fair to talk about reciprocity, though even then, when it is a reciprocity in lowering and not in raising duties, the word ceases altogether to be a term of reproach. But the matter did not end here. The Treaty with France was not like the famous Methuen Treaty with Portugal (1703), an exclusive bargain, to the specified disadvantage of a nation outside of the compact. In 1703 we bound ourselves to keep our duties on French wines one-third higher than the duty on the wines of Portugal. This

was the type of treaty which Adam Smith had in his mind 1860.
when he wrote his chapter on the subject. Pitt's Treaty ÆT. 56.
with France (1786) was of a different and better kind; and his motive in making it was not diplomatic or political, as had been the case in the old-fashioned treaties of commerce, but truly economical and social. He wished to legalize the commerce which was carried on illegally, and to an immense extent, by smuggling, always the spontaneous substitute for free trade; and he boldly accepted, moreover, the seeming paradox that reduction of duties may lead to increase of revenue.[3] Neither party stipulated for any peculiar advantages. Still, the benefits of the Treaty were confined to the two nations who made it. In 1860 England lowered her duties, not only in favour of French products, but in favour of the same products from all other countries. The reforms which France and England now made in favour of one another, in the case of England actually were, and in the case of France were to be, extended to other nations as well. This was not reciprocity of monopoly, but reciprocity of freedom, or partial freedom. England had given up the system of differential duties, and France knew that the products of every other country would receive at the English ports exactly the same measure and treatment as her own. France, on the other hand, openly intended to take her Treaty with England as a model for Treaties with the rest of Europe, and to concede by Treaty with as many Governments as might wish, a tariff just as favourable as that which had been arranged with England. As a matter of fact, within five years after the negotiations of 1860, France had made

[3] "Only 600,000 gallons of French brandy were legally imported in a year, while no less than 4,000,000 of gallons were believed to be every year imported into England. And since there was a total prohibition of French cambrics, every yard of them sold in England must have come in by illicit means."—Lord Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, i. 316-17.

Treaties with Belgium, the Zollverein, Italy, Sweden and Norway, Switzerland, and Austria.

In these, and in the treaty made afterwards by England with Austria, Sir Louis Mallet reminded its opponents in later years, that each of them had a double operation. Not only does each treaty open the market of another country to foreign industry; it immediately affects the markets that are already opened. For every recent treaty recognized the "most favoured nation" principle, the sheet-anchor of Free Trade, as it has been called. By means of this principle, each new point gained in any one negotiation becomes a part of the common commercial system of the European confederation. "By means of this network," it has been excellently said by a distinguished member of the English diplomatic service, "of which few Englishmen seem to be aware, while fewer still know to whom they owe it, all the great trading and industrial communities of Europe, i. e., England, France, Holland, Belgium, the Zollverein (1870), Austria, and Italy, constitute a compact international body, from which the principle of monopoly and exclusive privilege has once for all been eliminated, and not one member of which can take off a single duty without all the other members at once partaking in the increased trading facilities thereby created. By the self-registering action of the most favoured nation clause, common to this network of treaties, the tariff level of the whole body is being continually lowered, and the road being paved towards the final embodiment of the Free Trade principle in the international engagement to abolish all duties other than those levied for revenue purposes."

In face of unquestioned facts of this kind, nothing can be less statesmanlike than to deny that the treaties since 1860 have helped forward the great process of liberating the exchange of the products of their industry among the nations of the world. It is amazing to find able men so overmastered

by a mistaken conception of what it is that economic generalization can do for us, as to believe that they nullify the substantial service thus rendered by commercial treaties of Cobden's type to the beneficent end of international co-operation, by the mere utterance of some formula of economic incantation. If the practical effect of the commercial treaties after 1860, as conceived and inspired by Cobden, has been, without any drawback worth considering, to lead Europe by a considerable stride towards the end proposed by the partisans of Free Trade, then it is absurd to quarrel with the treaties because they do not sound in tune with the verbal jingle of an abstract dogma. It is beside the mark to meet the advantages gained by the international action of commercial treaties, by the formula, "Take care of your imports, and the exports will take care of themselves." The decisive consideration is that we can only procure imports from other countries on the cheapest possible terms, on condition that producers in those countries are able to receive our exports on the cheapest possible terms. Foreign producers can only do this, on condition that their governments can be induced to lower hostile tariffs; and foreign governments are only able, or choose to believe that they are only able, to lower tariffs in face of the strength of the protected interests, by means of a commercial treaty. The effect of a chain of such treaties—and the chain is automatically linked together by the favoured nation clause—is to lower duties all round, and lowering duties all round is the essential and indispensable condition of each country procuring for itself on the lowest possible terms imports from all other countries.

It is an economic error to confine our view to the imports or exports of our own country. In the case of England, these are intimately connected with, and dependent upon, the great circulating system of the whole world's trade.

1860. Æт. 56. Nobody has fully grasped the bearings of Free Trade, who does not realize what the international aspect of every commercial transaction amounts to; how the conditions of production and exchange in any one country affect, both actually and potentially, the corresponding conditions in every other country. It is not Free Trade between any two countries that is the true aim; but to remove obstacles in the way of the stream of freely exchanging commodities, that ought, like the Oceanus of primitive geography, to encircle the whole habitable world. In this circulating system every tariff is an obstruction, and the free circulation of commodities is in the long run as much impeded by an obstruction at one frontier as at another.[4] This is one answer to an idea which has been lately broached among us, under stress of the temporary reaction against Free Trade. It has been suggested that though we cannot restore Protection in its old simplicity, yet we might establish a sort of National Imperial Customs Union among the English dominions. The territory over which the flag of Great Britain waves, is so enormous and so varied in productive conditions, that we could well afford, it is urged, to shut ourselves within our own walls, developing our own resources, and consolidating a strong national sentiment, until the nations who are now fighting us with protective tariffs come round to a better mind. The answer to this is that the removal of the restriction on the circulation to a more distant point would not affect the vital fact that the circulation would still be restricted and interrupted. To induce our colonies and dependencies to admit our goods free, would of course be so much gained; just as the freedom of interior or domestic commerce, which was one of the chief causes of the early prosperity of Great Britain, was by so much a gain over the French system, which cut off province

[4] This is worked out with vigour and acuteness in the admirable pamphlet published by the Cobden Club in 1870, entitled, *Commercial Treaties: Free Trade and Internationalism. Four Letters by a disciple of Richard Cobden*

from province by customs barriers during the same period. But freedom of internal commerce, whether within an island or over a wide empire, is still not the same thing as universal freedom of exchange. An interruption, at whatever point in the great currents of exchange, must always remain an interruption and a disadvantage. England is especially interested in any transaction that tends to develope trade between any nations whatever. We derive benefit from it in one way or another. The mother country has no interest in going into a Customs Union with her colonies, with the idea of giving them any advantage or supposed advantage in trading with her over foreign countries.

It is not enough, therefore, to remove our own protective duties, though Peel may have been right under the circumstances of the time in saying that the best way of fighting a hostile tariff is by reforming your own. It is the business of the economic statesman to watch for opportunities of inducing other nations to modify duties on imports; because the release of the consumers of other nations is not only a stimulus to your own production for exportation, but has an effect in the supply of the imports which you declare to be the real object of your solicitude.

This was the conception at the bottom of the Commercial Treaty of 1860. "A treaty with France," said Mr. Gladstone, "is even in itself a measure of no small consequence; but that which gives to a measure of that kind its highest value is its tendency to produce beneficial imitation in other quarters. It is the fact that, in concluding that Treaty, we did not give to one a privilege which we withheld from another, but that our Treaty with France was, in fact, a treaty with the world, and wide are the consequences which engagements of that kind carry in their train."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE, 1859-60—PARIS—RETURN TO ENGLAND.

1859.
ÆT. 55.
THE business of the Treaty did not prevent Cobden from keeping up his usual copious correspondence. Much of it, as might be expected, had to do with his work in Paris; but he kept a keen eye upon what was going on elsewhere, and no effort that pointed in the right direction escaped him. Some extracts from the correspondence of this period will still be found interesting, both because they illustrate the character of the writer, and because they contain ideas on questions which even now are far from having run their full course.

(1.) *To Mr. Bright.*

On December 1, 1859, Mr. Bright made a speech at Liverpool, upon the invitation of the Financial Reform Association of that city. In this speech he unfolded a plan, which, as has been truly said of it, involved a complete financial revolution. The main features of the proposals were, that the income tax, the assessed taxes (except the house-tax), the tax on marine and fire insurances, and the excise on paper, should be repealed; all duties in the tariff should be abolished, save those on wine, spirits, and tobacco; and, to replace the deficiency thus created, there should be a tax of eight shillings on every hundred pounds of fixed income.

Dec. 16, 1859.—"I have been much pleased with the perusal of your masterly statement at Liverpool, every

word of which I have read. After all, I hardly know that the Liverpool men could do a better service than in preaching the abstract doctrine of direct taxation. People are attracted by the advocacy of a *principle*, to which alone we can feel any strong and lasting devotion. The threat of direct taxes held over our aristocracy, may perhaps do a little to restrain their proneness to Government extravagance; and it will help an honest Chancellor of the Exchequer to move forward in the path of commercial reform. There is an *apparent* tendency in your speeches to advocate the interest of the working class as apart from the upper classes. Now, I am sorry to say that whenever the case is so posed, there is a tendency in the middle class to range themselves with those above them, to resist a common danger. Your witticism of the middle class being invited to be the squire of the class above has been realized. Therefore, I have always studiously abstained from using the words 'working class,' as apart from the middle class, in discussing the question of taxation. For you see how eagerly your opponents parade the poor widow of 100*l*. a year. I cannot separate the interest of the small shopkeeper and the labourer, or the manufacturer and his operatives, in the question of taxation. Indeed, ultimately, God has made all our interests in the matter one and indivisible. I do not believe there is a hairsbreadth of difference between us, but you seem to take the working class sometimes too exclusively under your protection. They are quite powerless as opposed to the middle and upper classes, which is a good reason why they should not be allowed to be made to appear to be in antagonism to both.

"There is another point on which we should not differ in our cool moments, but on which you are sometimes carried away in the excitement of a speech beyond me. I mean where you seem to assume that a wiser policy in taxation or

1859. other matters will necessarily follow from a democratic reform.
ÆT. 55. I am always willing to take my chance of the consequences of such a change. If the majority in a democracy injure me and themselves at the same time by unsound legislation, I have at least the consolation of knowing that they are honest in their errors, and that a conviction of their mistake will for their own sakes lead to a change. It is far different where you are wronged by a self-interested minority. But I do not feel so confident as yourself that a great extension of the franchise would necessarily lead to a wiser system of taxation. On this subject I got a letter lately from Senator Mason, of Virginia, in which he says, speaking of direct taxation—'Our people are not yet philosophical enough to know that it is safer to feel the tax when you pay it, than to pay it without feeling it.' I am afraid that this rather pithy remark would apply to all other people at present. I have done with my dissentient remarks, which after all would not lead me into an opposite lobby to yourself, if we had five minutes' discussion together."

(2.) *To Mr. Bright.*

Considerations on Mr. Bright's general course and policy.

"*Dec.* 29, 1859.—You will be speaking at Birmingham again soon. It is hard to tell what to say. If you are intense on Reform, you will have a hearty response from the meeting, and little beyond it. If you are cooler than your wont, you will disappoint your hearers. Were I in your place, I should not dwell too much on the Reform topic. But then, what else can you talk about? I should like to see you turn the tables on those who have wasted another autumn on another bubble cry. But perhaps people are not yet sufficiently out of breath with the cry to listen to you. I observe the *Times*, having led the pack all through the

phantom chase, is now turning round, and saying that it was not from fear of the French that we were called on to arm. And this line is taken by its followers. I have always observed that, as the time for the meeting of Parliament approaches, the newspapers put on a more decent regard for propriety and consistency. They feel that a power of refutation and exposure is at hand when the House is in Session. This last autumn's escapade of the good British public, calling its youth to arm against an imaginary foe, after having seen twenty-six millions voted for its protection, is one of the most discouraging and humiliating spectacles I have witnessed. The effect it has on me is to produce a feeling of indifference. To be too much in earnest in the cause of common sense, with the liability to see one's countrymen running mad every year or two after any visionary programme launched by the anonymous writers of the *Times*, is only calculated to injure one's digestion, and perhaps ruin one's health; and so I try to cultivate a stoical apathy.

"Perhaps we are wrong in aiming at producing too large results within a given time. I do not, as I grow older, lose my faith in humanity, and its future destinies; but I do every year—perhaps it is natural with increasing years—feel less sanguine in my hope of seeing any material change in my own day and generation. I sometimes doubt whether you would not have done more wisely to rely on your House of Commons influence, and been more shy of the Stump. Your greatest power is in the House. In quiet times, there is no influence to be had from without, and if we fell into evil days of turbulence, and suffering and agitation, less scrupulous leaders would carry off the masses. You are not the less qualified to take your true position, from having shown that you are an outside, as well as an inside, leader. But I have an opinion that if

1859. you intend to follow politics, and not eschew office, you
ÆT. 55. must in future be more exclusively a House of Commons man.

"And then you must make up your mind to accept certain conditions of things as a part of our English political existence during your time. For instance, the Church and Aristocracy are great realities, which will last for your life and your sons'. To ignore them or despise them is equally incompatible with the part which I think you have the ambition to play, and which I am sure you are competent to perform. I remember that President Buchanan, the day before he left London on his return to America, in the course of a conversation over the tea-table, remarked: 'I leave England with the conviction that you are not yet able to govern yourselves without the aid of your aristocracy.' There are things to be done which you and I could make a so-called Liberal government do, if we were out of the Cabinet, without being held ineligible by the Court and Aristocracy (*with whom the most powerful part of the middle class will be found sympathizing*) to enter it, owing to any extreme democratic designs. But we are comparatively powerless if we can be assumed to be excluded from the government by either our own will, or that of the ruling class, owing to our entertaining revolutionary or fundamentally subversive doctrines. One great object which I should like to force our rulers, much against their will, to accomplish, is the limitation of our armed force, in relation to that of France. And this I will endeavour to promote, if I am spared, and my present task is successful, by an appeal to the French Government in the same unofficial way as I am now at work upon another affair. But I feel convinced that the great obstacle would be with our own ruling class.

"This could only be overcome by an honest party in the House, of which you must be the head. My talking days

are, I think, nearly over; I have no confidence in my voice serving me much in future. I suffer no inconvenience now; but a hoarseness interposes if I talk much, and I feel as if half an hour's public speaking would render me inaudible. However, I shall go to Cannes as soon as this business is decided one way or another, which must be within a fortnight. When I speak of being held eligible for office, I merely refer to the power which that gives us in the House. I have no intention to take office under any circumstances, because I think I could do more good out of office. Besides, it is too late even if I liked it. I am in my fifty-sixth year, and do not come of a long-lived parentage.

"I thought of saying a few words about the state of opinion here [Paris], the designs of the Emperor, etcetera. I have no prejudice against a voluntary armed force like the riflemen of Switzerland, or the militia of America, though it is open to question whether Joseph Hume was right in preferring a regular armed profession, on the principle of the division of labour. But the origin of *our* rifle corps, just after we had voted twenty-six millions for our armed professions, as a means of defence, and instigated by real or pretended fear of France, is such as to make the movement a disgraceful act of folly—speaking of the nation, and not of all the individuals who have been drawn into it."

(3.) *To William Hargreaves.*

Remarks on the writings of Louis Napoleon

"*Cannes, March* 14, 1860.—I have been amusing myself with reading very carefully the works of Louis Napoleon. They are published under his own auspices, in four splendid volumes, and are said to be without the alteration of a word. They have been lent to me, but if you were in an extravagant

1860. humour, they might be worth your buying. Besides the
Æt. 56. interest we all have in knowing what has been passing through such a brain for the last thirty years, the style of his composition is a model worth studying. Baron Bunsen, who is here, tells me, apropos of his style, that De Tocqueville, who died lately at Cannes, and who was no friend of the Emperor's, declared that Louis Napoleon was the only man living who could write 'monumental French.' It is, I suppose, the consciousness of the possession of this talent, so greatly appreciated in France, which leads him to come so frequently before the public in print; for if he be taciturn in oral communications, the quality assuredly does not attach to his pen . . . But when we have praised his style, we have expressed the best that can be said of his volumes. Most assuredly we cannot endorse all that he says as a political economist, as the enclosed extract will show. There are some curious historical chapters upon the progress of artillery, a subject to which he seems to have devoted much study, and which now possesses great interest. But the chief charm of his works is in the absolute perfection of the style of his occasional addresses, extending over a series of years. That one in particular announcing his intended marriage as a parvenu, and giving his reasons for making choice of a private individual for his wife, is the most striking of all for the ingenuity and boldness of his argument, and the beauty of its composition. I must say I sought in vain for traces of that spirit of vindictiveness towards England which politicians of the Horsman school tell us, with so much solemn mysteriousness, pervades his writings. The whole tone of his works seem to me to be so singularly forbearing and magnanimous towards the implacable and successful enemy of his great idol, the first Bonaparte; he treats the whole matter with so much philosophy when referring to the death struggle between France

and England, that I wonder the alarmists and invasionists never discovered a plot in the absence of all passionate resentment towards us, which characterizes these volumes." 1860. Æt. 56.

The following is the passage referred to:

(*Œuvres de Napoleon, Tome Deuxième, p.* 234.)

"L'Angleterre a réalisé le rêve de certains économistes modernes; elle surpasse toutes les autres nations dans le bon marché de ses produits manufacturés. Mais cet avantage, si c'en est un, n'a été obtenu qu'au préjudice de la classe ouvrière. Le vil prix de la marchandise dépend du vil prix du travail, et le vil prix du travail, c'est la misère du peuple. Il ressort d'une publication récente, que pendant les dernières années, tandis que l'industrie Anglaise triplait sa production, la somme employée pour solder les ouvriers, diminuait *d'un tiers*. Elle a été reduite de quinze millions à dix millions de livres sterling. Le consommateur a gagné, il est vrai, le tiers du salaire prélevé sur la sueur de l'ouvrier; mais de là aussi sont venus les perturbations et la malaise, qui ont affecté profondement la prosperité de la Grande Bretagne. Si, en France, les partisans de la liberté du commerce osaient mettre en pratique leurs funestes théories, la France perdrait en richesse une valeur d'au moins deux milliards; deux millions d'ouvriers resteraient sans travail, et notre commerce serait privé du bénéfice qu'il tire de l'immense quantité de matières premières qui sont importées pour alimenter nos manufactures.[1]

Fort de Ham, Août 1842."

(4.) *To W. Hargreaves.*

Effect of going to and fro between London and Paris.

"*Paris, April* 23, 1860.—A curious influence is exerted on my mind in going to and fro between London and Paris, which helps to account for what is almost unaccountable. When in England, I find myself so surrounded with sayings and doings which are founded on the assumption of evil designs on the part of the Emperor towards England, that I feel, in spite of myself, a little infected with doubt as to our safety. In fact, I breathe an atmosphere tainted with

[1] This extract contains some very erroneous doctrine as to the effect of increasing trade on workmen. But it is not necessary to discuss the matter here.

1860. Æt. 56. panic, and I become affected by the general uneasiness. If this be so in my case, in spite of my predilections and my sane surroundings, how much more must other people be affected? When I come to Paris, and approach close to the imagined source of danger, all uneasiness and doubt disappear from my mind. In fact all idea of England being attacked by France is founded on the ignorance of what is going on here, and on the play of the imagination when the danger is afar off. Here is an illustration, by the way, of the advantage which will arise from more intimate intercourse between the two countries."

(5.) *To W. Hargreaves.*

The state of Europe.

"*Paris, May* 7, 1860.—I have given a note of introduction to you to an old friend, Mr. Dunville, from the neighbourhood of Belfast, who with his mother and sister are stopping a fortnight in London, on their way from this to Ireland. They are first-rate people in our sense, and you will be very much pleased if you pass an evening in their society.

"We are now beginning the labours of the commission. If I were to judge by the programme setting forth our plan of proceedings, the task might last a couple of years. But I take it for granted that all the intended inquiries into every article of the French tariff will very soon shape itself into a rule of thumb, and that the Government, which has already all the information at its fingers'-ends, will undertake to act on its own responsibility. Whatever may be the result, I have made up my mind to be well abused for a year or two. In the end, after a few years' trial, the Treaty will justify itself. This assumes that we remain at peace, which the *Times* and its patrons seem bent on preventing.

"The state of Germany is very unsatisfactory. Enormous sums are being wasted by a very poor people in preparations for war. There is a great uneasiness both with respect to their internal and external relations. The worst of it is that, as I learn, influential politicians in Prussia are beginning to hold this language: 'We must have a war with France sooner or later, and it is the only way in which we can get rid of our internal discords, and swamp the small States under the Rule of Prussia.' These people say: 'We should be beaten back by France at the first shock, but we should recover everything with interest.' My belief is, that at this moment Louis Napoleon is about the most peaceable person in Europe. Everybody in France is well satisfied with the Savoy business, and the Emperor was never so popular. But he knows that he is mistrusted by all Europe, and that it would be dangerous to attempt any fresh extension of his boundaries. However, it must not be supposed that he has any love for the present territorial arrangements in Europe. There is no doubt that he would like to give Mr. Wyld an excuse for publishing another map of France. But he would not like it at the expense of a war with England. 1860. Ætat. 56.

"I am not very proud of the spectacle presented by our merchants, brokers, and M.P's., in their ovations to the pugilist Sayers. This comes from the brutal instincts having been so sedulously cultivated by our wars in the Crimea and especially in India and China. I have always dreaded that our national character would undergo deterioration (as did that of Greece and Rome) by our contact with Asia. With another war or two in India and China, the English people would have an appetite for bull-fights, if not for gladiators."

1861.
Æt. 57.

(6.) *To W. Hargreaves.*

Two Reasons against Political Despondency.

"*June* 5, 1860.—I am sorry to see that you have been laid up. Depend on it, you overdo the work in proportion to your forces. Don't let public matters worry you. Why should you? Whatever evils befall the country, you at least, in proportion to your strength, have done more than your share to prevent them. There are two things which we must always bear in mind when we grow impatient or desponding. How much has been done before us: how many will come after us to do what remains to be done."[1]

(7.) *To Mr. Bright.*

In 1860 violent disturbances broke out among the Christian population of Syria. They were followed by the dispatch of a force of occupation from the European powers, and a commissioner was appointed for the re-organization of Syria. The discussion in the spring of 1861, between the French and English Governments, turned on the continuance of the European occupation.

"*Algiers*, 18*th March*, 1861.—From what I hear from Paris, the two Governments are wrangling over Syrian matters. After what I saw of the spirit of the Foreign Office, it is always a source of wonder to me how any business in which the two Governments are concerned ever comes to an issue, and how they escape for six months from a rupture. For recollect, it is not merely Lord John's lecturing, but the ill-conditioned temper of —— and the subordinates with whom the details of the negotiations rest,

[1] On the other hand, on July 16, 1860, writing to a friend on the agitation kindled by the action of the House of Lords against the repeal of the Paper Duties, Cobden said:—"What strikes me in all these movements is the absence of new men. The good old veterans of the League turn up, but where are the young politicians?"

that has to be borne by the French Government. No one can defend, on principle, the French intervention in Syria. But our Government violates the principle of non-intervention towards the Turk every day; and every statesman in Europe, with the sole exception of Palmerston, recognizes the unavoidable fall of Ottoman rule at an early day, and the necessity of providing or recognizing some other mode of governing Turkey. Our Government alone now contends for the integrity of that ghastly phantom, the Ottoman Porte, at the same time that it lends its sanction by conferences at Paris, and commissions in Syria and Constantinople, to the violation of the rights of the Sultan's sovereignty. It is only when it is convenient for a topic for a diplomatic wrangle with Russia and France, or to reconcile the British public to a war, that the Sublime Porte is paraded as an independent Power, whose sovereign rights are to be treated with respect. Is there no way of bringing matters to a different attitude? In my opinion nothing can be so dangerous as the present mode of treating the Turkish question. Either we ought to apply the same principle as in Italy—viz. allow the races of the same language and religion to join in putting down a foreign domination—or else to interfere to some final purpose. If the Great Powers will allow the Greeks outside of the present Turkish Empire to give their fellow-countrymen, or at least their co-religionists of the same language and race, *material* aid, they will soon succeed, with the aid of the other Christian sects, in driving the Turks beyond the Bosphorus, and ere long in securing possession of the coast of Asia Minor and Syria. And why should this not be permitted by those who are so warm in their support of Garibaldi, who sallied forth from Nice with no better title to overturn the Neapolitan Government than the people of Athens or Syria would possess to drive the Turks from their

1861. less justifiable domination in Constantinople? In fact the
ÆT. 57. foreigner has practically ruled Italy longer than the Osmanlis have possessed the ancient capital of the Greeks. But if England is not prepared to allow the Christians to drive out their Mahometan rulers, what is she prepared to do? Surely it becomes a great country to have a policy which lifts its diplomacy out of the reach of mere intrigue and endless altercation and gossip, such as characterizes our present abortive proceedings on the Turkish question. The way in which we tolerate, nay perpetuate, the hideous evils of the Sultan's Government, *because it is not convenient to our politicians to bring the Eastern Question to an issue*—the way in fact in which we prevent a body from dying which is no longer able to live, and look on complacently whilst millions of intelligent beings are suffering from contact with this despotism, tends to degrade Englishmen in the eyes of foreign nations, presenting us in the light of a selfish and unsympathizing people.

"There are a couple of volumes of De Tocqueville's correspondence and remains lately published, and in his letters to Senior and other English friends (which are full of interest), he alludes very delicately to the little sympathy felt for us in our Indian troubles by the nations of the Continent, and attributes it to the general impression that prevails (and which he says is not quite unfounded), that the English people make their foreign policy entirely subservient to their own narrow interests."

(8.) *To Samuel Lucas.*

The Syrian Massacres—French Intervention.

"*Paris, August* 16, 1860.—I am disappointed that more is not said and done to create sympathy for the many thousand homeless widows and orphans in Syria. So great

a calamity, so near to our doors by steam and telegram, ought to excite more compassion. Pray advocate subscriptions to relieve the sufferers. Money is really the form in which intervention is most needed, though I would not say a word in opposition to French succour in a more potent form. How are the guilty to be punished, or those sold into captivity to be recovered, unless an European armed force appear on the scene? The Turkish soldiers cannot be depended on, for the simple reason that they are not paid." 1861. Æt. 57.

(9.) *To Mr. Bright.*

Free Trade could only have been carried while the Nation was in a sober mood.

"To my eye, from this distance, there seems a strange contempt of sober domestic politics among the English people. They have been *blasés* by wars in India and the Crimea and by the great events of the Continent, and are like people who have drunk to excess, or eaten nothing but spiced meats, and cannot relish anything less exciting. I have often thought how lucky we were that when struggling for Free Trade in corn, the Continent was slumbering under Louis Philippe's soporific reign, and that we had to deal with statesmen like Peel and Lord Aberdeen, who were too honest and sedate to get up a war or foreign complications to divert attention from home grievances. Think how impossible it would be in these times to keep public attention for seven years to one domestic grievance. Why Garibaldi would draw off the eyes of the country from any agitation you could raise in our day! The concentrated earnestness with which political parties were at work in the United States, inspired me with full faith that the people of the country would, in spite of the difficulties and dangers of their political issues, work out their salvation. If I had

1860. found them engaged in settling the affairs of the whole
Æt. 56. world, instead of their own, I should have despaired."

(10.) *To William Hargreaves.*

Annexation of Savoy.

"I should like to know what practical result is likely to follow from our Foreign Minister persevering in borrowing the tone of Mr. Kinglake and Sir Robert Peel in his despatches to the French Government. The annexation of Savoy to France is a 'fait accompli.' The bargain has pleased Piedmont, the Savoyards, and the French people, the only parties *really* interested; and why, instead of the snarling, dissatisfied tone in which our Foreign Minister persists in treating the matter, cannot he dismiss it with a little of the dignity with which the Russian or Austrian Government has got rid of the disagreeable affair. There is nothing so unworthy of a nation, or even of a man, as a tone of dissatisfied criticism which leaves no after resource but a fit of pouting and sulking. It is a style of controversy fit only for the nursery. I should like to know whether the correspondence now going on between our Foreign office and the American Government upon the subject of the island of St. Juan, is conducted in the same captious, irritating tone as that which has characterized some of our recent despatches to France, Austria, and Naples. If so, the train is being laid for either a war or a great humiliation."

(11.) *To William Hargreaves.*

Hopelessness of our rule in India.

"*Paris, August* 4, 1860.—To confess the truth I have no heart for discussing any of the *details* of Indian management, for I look on our rule there as a whole with an eye of despair. Whether you put a screen before your eyes and

call it a local army, or whether you bring the management face to face in London, the fact is still the same. The English people in Parliament have undertaken to be responsible for governing one hundred and fifty millions of people, despotically, in India. They have adopted the principle of a military despotism, and I have no faith in such an undertaking being anything but a calamity and a curse to the people of England. Ultimately, of course, nature will assert the supremacy of her laws, and the white skins will withdraw to their own latitudes, leaving the Hindoos to the enjoyment of the climate to which their complexion is suited. In the meantime we shall suffer all kinds of trouble, loss, and disgrace. Every year will witness an increased drain of men and money to meet the loss entailed on us. In the meantime, too, an artificial expansion of our exports growing out of government expenditure in India, will delude us as to the value of our 'possessions' in the East, and the pride of territorial greatness will prevent our loosening our hold upon them. Is it not just possible that we may become corrupted at home by the reaction of arbitrary political maxims in the East upon our domestic politics, just as Greece and Rome were demoralized by their contact with Asia? But I am wandering into the regions of the remote future. It is, however, from an abiding conviction in my mind that we have entered upon an impossible and hopeless career in India, that I can never bring my mind to take an interest in the details of its government."

(12.) *To Henry Ashworth.*

The War in China.

"*Paris, August* 27, 1860.—* * * * I have been watching with interest the course of events in China, where it seems we are performing the double and rather *inconsistent* task

1860. Æt. 56. of aiding the rebellion in the interior and putting it down on the coast! It is well known that by our wars with the Chinese—by paralysing the central government and destroying its prestige with its people,—we help the rebels in their work of confusion and slaughter. But on their approach to Shanghai, we are, it seems, to help the Government to resist the insurgents. But of what use will the seaports be if the interior of the empire, where silk and tea are grown, is to be given up to pillage and anarchy? Think of the Americans coming to let loose fire and slaughter in Lancashire and Yorkshire, but setting up at the same time as the protectors of Liverpool! Where is all this folly and wickedness to end? Shall we ever learn to live at peace and be content with the honest possessions with which God has so bountifully blessed our island? Unfortunately, we have a class—and that the most influential one—which makes money out of these distant wars, or these home panics about a French invasion. How could your aristocracy endure without this expenditure for wars and armaments? Could not a less worthy and inhuman method of supporting them be hit upon? When I am talking over the reduction of duties with M. Rouher, and we come to some small industry employing a few hands and a little capital, which has put in its claim for high protection, I am in the habit of suggesting to him that rather than interfere with the trade of the country for the purpose of feeding and clothing these small protected interests, he had better withdraw the parties from their unprofitable occupations, take some handsome apartments for them in the Louvre Hotel, and feast them on venison and champagne at the country's expense for the rest of their days. Might not a similar compromise be entered into with the younger sons of our aristocracy, instead of supporting them by the most costly of all processes, that of war or preparation for war?" * *

(13.) *To Samuel Lucas.*

Anti-social interest of great Producers.

"*Paris*, 1860.—I looked in yesterday at Galignani's reading-room (where I had not been before) to glance at the papers. They are of course all high-priced, and not one word was said in any one of them, weekly, daily, or provincial, upon the subject in question. This very conspiracy to ignore the question of the paper duty ought to be the most conclusive argument in favour of its repeal. It proves that the high-priced papers have an interest opposed to that of the public. I remember when Lord Althorp was Chancellor of the Exchequer, being one of a deputation of calico-printers urging on the Government the repeal of the excise duty on prints. In the course of the conversation it was remarked that some of the largest printers were opposed to the movement, on which Lord Althorp, with that instinctive good sense which characterized him, observed: 'That is in my opinion one of the strongest possible arguments in your favour, for it is evident if the great calico-printers are in favour of the tax, that their interest cannot be the public interest.'"

(14.) *To Samuel Lucas.*

Politics in the Counties.

"*Algiers*, *23rd February*, 1861.—It is a mistake to suppose, because there are no contests in the counties, and because a few nobles or proprietors settle the candidatures and the returns in every case, that there is no political spirit in our provincial towns and villages. There is more healthy radicalism to be found scattered about our small towns and villages than in the larger boroughs. I mean that it is a more sturdy kind of democratic sentiment, for

1861. it goes directly against the feudal domination under which
Æt. 57. we really live, whereas in the great towns radicalism often misses its mark and is assailing some insignificant grievance. If you can see your way for carrying out this idea, I would take some apropos occasion for announcing[8] the intention to 'open up,' as we say of China, the politics of our counties. You would then have volunteers aiding you with information. Let it be seen who are the men who really return the county members. Show how absolutely the 5 to 10,000 registered electors are ignored in the choice of their representatives. No meetings to discuss the question, no contests, not even a newspaper controversy, to decide the merits of candidates who are generally totally unknown by any political antecedents. Challenge a comparison between the mode of doing these things in the counties and the large boroughs, as well as between the merits of the knights of the shire, and the burgesses returned to Parliament."

(15.) *To William Hargreaves.*

Life in Algiers—The English Working Class.

"*Algiers, 1st March,* 1861.—The weather here continues all that could be possibly desired. The scenery around Algiers for walking or horse exercise is remarkably beautiful. It is threaded with foot-paths and Arab tracks in all directions, presenting a great variety of views. I have hardly ever seen a city possessing such resources in its neighbourhood. We have a clear sky generally, or with only a few clouds to break the monotony. Very seldom any rain. It is very hot in the sun's rays. A thermometer on a table in front of the house stood the other day at 95. But in the shade it is quite different. . . . This differ-

[8] Mr. Lucas was now Editor of the *Morning Star*.

ence between the sun and shade makes it difficult to avoid getting a chill. It is this, too, that prevents vegetation coming on before its time; for although we have green peas and flowers in abundance, and the almond-trees and others are showing young fruit, yet the vines and other trees have not yet begun to shoot. You must not, however, suppose from this that the nights are cold. Such a thing as a white frost is not known. Fogs are equally unknown. If called on to say, I should be of opinion that the air is too sharp and clear for active consumptive cases. But for a person without organic disease, but with a tendency to asthma or pulmonary weakness, I should consider it excellent.

"My friends advise me to remain till after Easter, which happens very early this year, and I think I shall do so. There is certainly nothing in the House to tempt one to return. The tone of the leading, or rather misleading, members is just of that hollow mocking kind which would worry me into bad health. I wonder the working people are so quiet under the taunts and insults offered them. Have they no Spartacus among them to head a revolt of the slave class against their political tormentors? I suppose it is the reaction from the follies of Chartism, which keeps the present generation so quiet. However, it is certain that so long as five millions of men are silent under their disabilities, it is quite impossible for a few middle-class members of Parliament to give them liberty, and this is the language I shall hold when called on to speak to them. It is bad enough that we have a political machine which will not move till the people put their shoulders to the wheel. But we must face things as they are, and not live in a dreamland of our own creating. The middle class have never gained a step in the political scale without long labour and agitation out of doors, and the working people

1861. Æt. 57. may depend on it they can only rise by similar efforts, and the more plainly they are told so the better."

(16.) *To J. Parkes.*

Arlès-Dufour—The Rights of Women.

"*Feb.* 11, 1860.—It is charming to see him at sixty-five with his heart still running off with his head! He would not allow the word 'obey' to be used by women in the marriage ceremony, and has other very rebellious notions My doctrine is that in proportion as physical force declines in the world, and moral power acquires the ascendant, women will gain in the scale. Christianity in its doctrines, though not yet coming up to its own standard in its practice, did more than anything since the world began to elevate women. The Quakers have *acted* Christianity, and their women have approached nearer to an equality with the other sex than any of the descendants of Eve. I am always labouring to put down physical force, and substitute something better, and therefore I consider myself a fellow-labourer with your daughter in the cause of women's rights! And yet, strange to say, women are the greatest favourers of soldiering and sailoring and all that appertains to war."

It was the 6th of May before Cobden arrived in Paris on his way home. On the 12th, he had an audience of the Emperor at the Tuileries—the last interview that they had.

"*May* 12.—The Emperor spoke upon the Turkish question and the affairs of Syria, and seemed to regret the misunderstandings which arose upon the subject between himself and the English Government. I suggested that the two countries should come to a frank agreement; that neither of them would take a hectare of territory from Turkey in Europe; that the same policy should be enforced upon Russia and Austria; that then the doctrine of non-intervention which

had been applied to Italy, should be adopted towards European Turkey; that the Christians should be allowed to drive the Turks back into Asia; that the Greeks had a right to repossess themselves of their ancient capital of Constantinople; and no foreign Power had a right to stand between them and the recovery of their rights from their Mahometan conquerors. He remarked that it would be desirable to let Austria have Bosnia and Herzegovina, in exchange for Venetia; and that it had been the policy of Russia to prevent the formation of a Greek empire at Constantinople. I urged strongly that if France and England were to apply the policy of non-intervention to Turkey in Europe, and renounce all selfish objects themselves, they would be in so strong a position both morally and materially as to be able to dictate the same course to Russia. I urged the necessity of abandoning the idea of sustaining the Turks in Europe; that the Christians in Turkey constituted the only element of progress; that they possessed the wealth, carried on the commerce, and comprised the artists, professional men, &c.; that the Turks did not possess a single vessel engaged in foreign trade; and that all the commerce of the Black Sea and the eastern parts of the Mediterranean were rapidly falling into their hands (the Greeks); in fact, Turkey in Europe, so far as the Mahometan population was concerned, had hardly more relations with the progress and civilization of the age, than Timbuctoo had.

1861. Ær. 57.

"*May* 14*th*.—Called on Mdme. Cornu, a lady who from her childhood had been the playmate and friend of the Emperor, and who showed us a couple of volumes of his letters to her, the first of which was dated in 1820, when he was only twelve years old. Several of the letters were read to us. They were written in an affectionate and sentimental tone. She described him as possessing a feminine softness of character, that he always as a boy was very slow

1861. Æt. 57. and vacillating in choosing any course of action, but that when once decided, he followed his bent with great energy. She did not regard him as a genius, but as possessing great good sense, with a very amiable disposition.

"*May* 15.—Dined with M. Rouher, Minister of Commerce, and met a large party. Had a conversation with the Minister of Marine, who narrated to me the facts of the explanations he had had with Mr. Lindsay respecting the force of the two navies; said he had invited Lord Clarence Paget to come over and inspect the French navy and ascertain the truth of the statement made by the French Government. He (the Minister of Marine) stated that the French did not aim at an equality with the English, but merely to be the first of the second-class Powers; that they relied on their army and regarded their navy as merely an accessory, whilst England trusted to her navy, and only looked to her army as an accessory. He complained that England had last year greatly exceeded the fair proportion which she was accustomed to maintain in comparison with the French navy. He told me that the Emperor had often spoken to him on this subject. He remarked, also, that the Emperor had discussed with him the question whether he ought to make additional outlays for his navy and for fortifications to meet the preparations going on in England, and that he (the Emperor) had dismissed the subject with the observation, 'Let them (the English) go on with their expenditure; they will find out the uselessness of their policy by-and-by. In the meantime, I don't know that it does us any harm.' The Minister of Marine told me that Lord Cowley had complained to him that he had given the particulars of the amount of the French naval force to Mr. Lindsay, and not to him; the Minister replied that it was useless to give such particulars to the English Government, as they were only misconstrued and misrepresented."

On May 16, Cobden left Paris for England. The directors of the railway placed a carriage gratuitously at his disposal to Dieppe. A public meeting had been held at Dover, at which a resolution of welcome had been passed, to be presented to him on landing. But he went from Dieppe, not to Dover, but to Newhaven, whence he proceeded to the old home (May 18) under the Sussex Downs, having seen the manners of many men and many cities, and having done a good and difficult stroke of work for two great countries.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE AMERICAN WAR—FORTIFICATION SCHEMES—INTERNATIONAL LAW.

1861. Æt. 57.

In one of his last letters before leaving Algiers, Cobden had written to Mr. Hargreaves in rather a depressed vein. "The truth must be told," he said; "though one does not like publicly to shelve oneself—my work is nearly done. I am nearly fifty-seven and not, like you, of a long-lived family. Since I passed my meridian a few years ago, I have found my powers sensibly waning and particularly those organs of the voice which I exercised so rudely whilst in their prime, and which were naturally but a weak inheritance from my father. If, however, I could pass the remainder of my days with only the labour of an average person of my years, I could, I dare say, nurse myself into a good old age. The question is whether I ought rather to content myself with a briefer span and the satisfaction of trying to do something a little beyond my strength? It is a nice question for casuists, for the home duties affecting one's young children intrude."

When Cobden returned to England his public position had more than recovered the authority and renown which had been seriously impaired by his unpopular attitude on the Russian War, and his devotion to the thankless questions of Retrenchment and Peace. It was felt that the reproach of sentimental statesmanship could not well be applied to a man who had conducted so tough and laborious an undertak-

ing as the negotiation of a tariff. The commercial class 1861.
were compelled to forgive what they called his crotchets, to ÆT. 57.
one who had opened for them new channels of wealth. The Lord Mayor entertained him at a banquet. In the House of Commons he received a hearty welcome, but a short speech on the repeal of the paper duty was his only contribution to its proceedings before the end of the session. He had never even in the darkest times lost the ear of this assembly. It seldom refuses to listen to anybody who can furnish it in moderately few words with aptly chosen fact, or substantial and unsophisticated argument. Everybody understood that neither he nor Mr. Bright took up a question for the sake of having a question. Their subjects were put into their minds by actual circumstances from without. Their habit, as I think that Cobden himself said, was only to step out and join the debate when they saw that it was passing their door. It was always known that whenever Cobden spoke, he really sought to have something done or left undone. A speech with him was a means of accomplishing something, and always referred to practical performance of some kind. "You know gentlemen, I never perorate," he sometimes said to great meetings of his constituents, "and when I have done, I leave off, and sit down." This abstinence was in itself an enormous recommendation. Then as a debater, so fine a judge as Mr. Disraeli pronounced Cobden to have few equals; as a logician, he described him as close and compact, adroit, acute, and even subtle. Even the politicians who most disliked what one of them called Boanerges-Liberalism, found nothing to offend them in a man who was never either declamatory or passionate; and who never lost sight of the sympathies of those whom he addressed.[1]

[1] Mr. George Hope, the well-known tenant-farmer (of Fenton Barns), gives an account in one of his letters of the way in which Cobden used to be received in the House:—

1861. Æt. 57. Before the year was over, events came to pass which once more brought Cobden, and perhaps in a still greater degree Mr. Bright, into an almost angrier conflict than before with the same classes and interests with whom they had been in strife from the first. The great civil war broke out between the Northern and the Southern states of the American Union. England, according to its peculiar custom, was quickly divided into two vehemently opposed camps. Once more Cobden found himself in antagonism to Lord Palmerston, Lord Russell, the *Times* newspaper, and all the other representatives of the aristocratic classes, and those who imitate and feel with these classes.

As his correspondence shows, Cobden did not at first seize the true significance of the struggle. There were reasons why he should be slow to take the side of the North. One of them was that he could not for a time bear to face the prospect that the community which had hitherto been the realization on so great a scale of his pacific ideals, should after all plunge into war just as a monarchy or an oligarchy might have done. The North, by refusing to allow the South to

"Mr. Cobden drove us to the House of Commons, as there was a morning sitting, and, having put us into the Speaker's gallery, took his place in the House. The business was the County Courts Bill. The Solicitor-General spoke long and well, but had to give in as to who should practise before these courts. He (the Solicitor-General) wished to confine it to attorneys and barristers, one of each. After several others spoke, most of them in the midst of much noise, Mr. Cobden rose; at once you might have heard a pin fall, and in a very few sentences he put the matter in a true light. He said . . . . that there was to be no monopoly, that the suitor might employ nobody or anybody he pleased, and there was tremendous cheering. Afterwards Mr. Cobden spoke again, and with the same effect. After a vast deal of talk, strangers were ordered to withdraw, but no division took place, as the Government gave in, and Mr. Cobden came to us rejoicing in his victory. He took us to the House of Lords (where we saw the Lord Chancellor and some others), and to see the proceedings before a Committee of the House of Commons. With Mr. Smith, the Member for Dunfermline, we went over all the New Houses of Parliament. We met with large numbers of Members, who attributed to Mr. Cobden the victory gained."—*Memoir*, p. 185

secede, seemed to him at first to be the author of the strife.
Another reason why his sympathies wavered was that though
the Southerners were slaveholders, their interests made them Free Traders. As we have seen more than once, Cobden was always prone to be led by his sympathies as an economist. The hesitation, however, did not last long. He tolerably soon came round to a more correct view of the issues at stake, partly under the influence of Mr. Bright, whose sagacity, sharpened by his religious hatred of slavery, at once perceived that a break-up of the American Union would be a damaging blow to the cause of freedom all over the world. At the beginning of the struggle, they happened to meet Mr. Motley at breakfast. With a good deal of liveliness Cobden attacked something which Mr. Motley had been writing in the newspapers in favour of the Northern case. As they walked away down Piccadilly together, Mr. Bright remonstrated with Cobden on these symptoms of a leaning towards the South. The argument was continued and renewed as other arguments had been between them. The time came for Cobden to address his constituents at Rochdale. "Now," said Mr. Bright, with a final push of insistence, "this is the moment for you to speak with a clear voice." Cobden's vision by this time was no longer disturbed by economic or other prepossessions, and he was henceforth as generally identified as Mr. Bright with support of the Northern cause.

The interest in the conflict soon took a practical turn. The circumstances of the war very speedily raised great questions connected with the maritime rights of belligerents and neutrals, and Cobden threw himself energetically into a discussion which was of vital importance to Great Britain. His activity between the date of the Commercial Treaty and the time of his death was principally directed to two objects; the improvement of international law as it affects commerce in time of war, and the limitation of expenditure upon

1862. unneeded schemes of national defence. The first and more
ÆT. 58. important of these subjects had been brought into a conspicuous place for public discussion by the Declaration of Paris in 1856. Free ships were then declared to make free goods. The merchants of a nation in a state of war were to be free to carry on their trade as usual, provided that they should send their goods in the ships of neutral Powers. Cobden carried this favour to neutrals a great deal further, and he explained his position in a carefully reasoned letter to Mr. Ashworth, then the Chairman of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce (April 10, 1862).[3] Not only, he contended, ought all private property, that of enemies no less than that of neutrals, to be exempt from capture at sea, but neutral ships ought to be exempt from right of visitation and search, and, most important of all, the commercial ports of an enemy ought to be exempt from blockade. Cobden's defence of this transformation of what he called the old barbarous code of international maritime law, rested not merely on the claims of natural justice, but on the special requirements of our own country. A population circumstanced as ours is in respect both of its food and of the raw materials of its industry, is interested beyond all others in removing every regulation which interferes with the free circulation of the necessaries of life, whether in time of peace or war. Why should we persist, he asked, in upholding a belligerent right which we have always shrunk from enforcing, and shall never rigorously apply, by which we place in the hands of other belligerents the power at any moment of depriving a large part of our population of the supply of the raw materials of their industry and of the necessaries of life? The Cotton

[3] Published in his Collected Writings, ii. pp. 5—22. The three changes which he there proposes are those enumerated in the letter to Mr. Paulton, below, p. 395.

Famine in Lancashire, caused by the blockade of the Southern ports of the United States, gave to these views a painful appositeness, and Cobden pressed the arguments of his letter to Mr. Ashworth still more forcibly and with a greater breadth of illustration in an address to the Manchester Chamber of Commerce in the autumn of the same year.[3] 1862. Æt. 58.

In the course of 1862 Cobden made one of his most determined and systematic onslaughts upon Lord Palmerston's policy of national defence. He carried on very effective skirmishing during the session, until at the close of it (Aug. 1), as an eye-witness describes it, they engaged in a regular single combat.[4] The House was thin, the conclusion was foregone, and no effect followed from Cobden's undaunted perseverance. Perhaps more was done by a pamphlet which he published earlier in the same year, *The Three Panics*, a strenuous and humiliating narrative of the incoherent alarms of invasion which had seized successive Governments in 1848, in 1853, and in 1862.[5] Mr. Gladstone thought that the narrative laid more than the full share of blame upon Governments

[3] *Speeches*, ii. 279. Oct. 25, 1862.

[4] "There they stood," said Mr. Grant Duff, "unreconciled and irreconcilable—the representatives of two widely different epochs, and of two widely different types of English life. The one trained in the elegant but superficial culture which was usual among the young men of his position in life at the beginning of this century, full of pluck, full of intelligence, but disinclined, alike by the character of his mind and by the habit of official life from indulging in political speculation, or pursuing long trains of thought; yet yielding to no man in application, in the quickness of his judgment, in knowledge of a statesman's business, and in the power of enlisting the support of what has been truly called 'that floating mass which in all countries and all time has always decided all questions.' The other derived from nature finer powers of mind, but many years passed away before he could employ his great abilities in a field sufficiently wide for them. There he stood, an admirable representative of the best section of the class to which he belongs, full of large and philanthropic hopes, and full of confidence in his power to realize them," &c. Mr. Grant Duff's *Elgin Speeches*, p. 25.—See his *Speeches*, ii. 257.

[5] Collected Writings, vol ii.

1862. and Parliament, and that it was unjust to let the general
ÆT. 58. public go scot-free. He told Cobden a story of a large farmer whom he had canvassed in the general election of 1857. He exclaimed to the farmer against the amount of the military and naval charges. "Well, sir," the voter said, "we want to be defended;" and no impression was to be made upon him. In truth, as Mr. Gladstone put it, there was a residuum of excitement standing over from the Russian war which had nourished all the subsequent alarm. Nor was it to be denied, either, that the world had become more volcanic since the days to which Cobden referred. It was in vain that he quoted Peel's excellent practical maxim, that in time of peace "you must consent to incur some risk" (see above, p. 71). There was one risk which statesmen and the public saw closer at hand, and which they were bent on not incurring if they could help it, and that was risk from the possible necessities of the French Emperor. On the special issues, therefore, between himself and Lord Palmerston, such as the Fortification Scheme, Cobden made little way in opinion. What he did was certainly to moderate what Mr. Gladstone called "the spirit of expenditure," and this according to him was more objectionable and more dangerous than the expenditure itself.[6]

[6] The case against Cobden's view was well put in a letter addressed to him by Lord John Russell:—

"Pembroke Lodge, *April* 2, 1861.

"MY DEAR MR. COBDEN,—The question you raise in your letter to me of the 22nd March is a very serious one, and so we must both consider it.

"Lord Palmerston, it appears from the *Times*, has said that the policy of France has been for a length of time to get up a navy which shall be equal if not superior to our own. Lord Palmerston does not complain of this policy, but he says that to deny it is to shut our eyes against notorious facts, and he defends a policy which is meant to provide for our own security against this notorious policy of France. As to the facts, I do not pretend to enter into details of rival navy estimates, but I will mention what is notorious. It is notorious that two or three years ago France had a

He deplored the absence from the scene of his steadfast ally, but Mr. Bright remained at Rochdale. He told Cobden how

number of line-of-battle ships exceeding by one that in the British navy. It is notorious that France is now building a number of iron-cased ships more or less rapidly, exceeding that which we are building. It is notorious that having these ships she has between 30,000 and 40,000 seamen, inscribed in a register, whom she can add to her present number of sailors, which exceeds 33,000. Such being the state of facts, I will mention to you that two years ago I stated to the Count de Persigny, then Ambassador of France, that our maritime strength was essential to our existence as a nation; that in 1817 Lord Castlereagh had stated to a Select Committee that Great Britian ought to have a navy equal to the two strongest navies in the world, that the nation had accepted this dictum as a practical maxim always to be kept in view.

"Acting on these general views, we do not care whether France has or not 400,000 soldiers in arms, with 200,000 more ready drilled and capable of joining their colours in a fortnight, but we do care when we see her cherishing, nursing, and increasing her naval forces. We therefore endeavour to provide a navy adequate to maintain our character, our position, and our safety. We are willing to stake our existence as a Ministry on the grant of the number of men for the navy we have asked for. I am aware that the expense is great, the burden is irksome, and that the French are irritated by our obstinacy in being determined to defend ourselves. But all these considerations yield to the paramount consideration of national security.

"Upon this ground whenever you raise the question we shall be ready to stand.

"Allow me before I close to ask you to reflect on the suggestions which are made to you and Mr. Lindsay, and not to Lord Cowley, Col. Claremont, and Commander Hore, by the French Ministers. These suggestions appear to me to betoken a desire on the part of France to raise in Parliament an opposition to armaments of a defensive character, in order to ensure French supremacy. This policy would not be unnatural, nor would it be new. Lord Macaulay, in giving an account of the instructions of Lewis to his Ambassador, Count Tallard, when he came to England after the peace of Ryswick, says, 'In the original draft of the instructions was a curious paragraph which, on second thoughts, it was determined to omit. The Ambassador was directed to take proper opportunities of cautioning the English against a standing army as the only thing which could really be fatal to their laws and liberties.'

"We are very glad to enter with the French into improved commercial relations, and very grateful to you for your labours in this direction. But when they advise us against arming for our defence, while they do not 'bate a jot of their preparations military and naval, the instinct of the British nation distrusts the friendship which appears in so suspicious a guise.

I remain, yours very faithfully,

J. RUSSELL."

1862. he admired his courage and perseverance, but he could not
ÆT. 58. imitate it. For the moment he acknowledged himself beaten. The fates were against them in the shape of the ignorance and flunkeyism of the middle classes. After the final battle in August, Mr. Bright wrote to him that he had maintained the struggle most manfully. "I have never," he said, "read speeches with more pleasure than these in which you have attempted to destroy the most shameless imposture of our time. But speeches will hardly do it. Since 1854 the public have been so thoroughly demoralized that they have become literally helpless, and I can scarcely conceive of an event sufficiently insulting and alarming to them to excite them to any positive and united action. The working men have no leaders of their own class, and they have no faith in any others. I wait, therefore, for some accident to bring about a change. Possibly Palmerston's final fall, which cannot be long postponed, may act as an awakener throughout the country. Still I think your speeches are preparing the way for some discoveries on the part of our dim-seeing people." This prophecy was fulfilled to the letter. Liberalism remained stationary until Lord Palmerston's death, and it was not long after that event that the great awakening took place which landed Mr. Gladstone in power, with Mr. Bright himself for the most popular and influential of his colleagues.

Cobden's correspondence during these final years touches other topics, but the fortunes of the war in America, international maritime law, and national expenditure, were the subjects which now filled the largest space both in his thoughts and in his public addresses.

Maritime Law.

"*April* 26, 1861. (*To Mr. W. S. Lindsay.*)—In your letter upon maritime law in time of war, you shirk the

pinching point of the whole question, by omitting allusion 1861.
to the fact that we gave up our old belligerent rights over Æt. 57.
neutrals, *not from choice but from necessity.* It was the attitude of the United States at the outbreak of the Russian war, which induced us to suspend those 'rights' of search and seizure, the enforcement of which led to our last war with America. And we yielded up permanently those rights at the Paris Congress from the same motives, namely, deference to the attitude of the United States, though no American plenipotentiary was present. In fact, as you know, all the modifications in our old arbitrary navigation code had their origin in the rising power of the United States as a maritime people.

"Looked at in this light, the question is much more simple than you assume it to be, for you put the alternative of going back to the state of things before the Paris Congress, as though the consent of England to that Congress were a voluntary choice and not an inevitable necessity. Viewed in this manner, there cannot be a doubt in any sane mind that it is our interest to go on even to the extent stipulated for by President Buchanan in his late letter on the subject. With the European law as it now stands, it merely offers the carrying trade to the United States in case of a war between England and any other maritime state sufficiently powerful to keep a few fast steamers at sea. Anybody who opposes your proposal to put England and America on the same footing in case of war, does not understand our present situation.

"P.S. The peace-at-any-price party (if there be one) are not so much interested as the war people in putting us on a par with the United States in case of hostilities with a maritime power; for in the present state of things a war with France, whatever might be the ultimate result, must involve tenfold sacrifices to England, as compared with what would be the case if your plan were acceded

1861. to. In fact, if France could keep a few swift steam corvettes
ÆT. 57. at sea, to raise our sea insurance at Lloyd's 10 per cent., our ships would have to transfer their registry to the United States or to rot in our ports. It is evident that the knowledge of these facts must weigh with our statesmen to prevent them from embarking in a war with France. In so far it plays the game of the peace-at-any-price party, but at the risk of national humiliation."

"*July* 27, 1861. („)—I have read the debates on the iron-cased ships in the *Times*. It is important only so far as it elicited a most able and statesmanlike speech from Disraeli, which will bear fruits.[7] . . . . You were wrong in throwing overboard your Paris authority, and giving in your adhesion to the Secretary of the Admiralty. There was no necessity to contradict him until you had the *disproofs*. But I would have waited for the answer from the other side. My maxim has been to distrust the Treasury bench at all times, and never admit myself wrong in a controversy with the Government, until I have better evidence than their assertions. Old Saddletree's example in the *Heart of Midlothian* is worth remembering. When hard pressed by an opponent in an argument, who asked, 'There, can ye deny that, Master Saddletree?" he replied, "No; but I'm not going to admit it, neither.'"

[7] The subject of the discussion was the naval competition between England and France. Mr. Disraeli's point was that there could be no reason why the two Governments should not come to an understanding as to the relative proportion of the naval forces to be maintained by the two Powers; and that if the march of science compelled fresh efforts to establish adequate naval forces, the leading statesmen of each country ought at least to do all in their power to enlighten the public as to the true meaning of what was going on. Lord Palmerston, instead of laying stress on the revolution in naval affairs, always left people to suppose that an insane competition for supremacy at sea was going on between two rival nations. (*Hansard*, clxiv. 1678). This was only one of several admirable speeches made by Mr. Disraeli at this time, which justified Cobden's preference of him over Lord Palmerston. But Mr. Disraeli in power thirteen years afterwards adopted Palmerston's policy and his vices in the Levant, in India, and in South Africa.

British Policy in China.

1861. (*To Mr. Hargreaves*).—You will have seen that these articles generally, especially those in the *Times*, lay all the blame of their wars on our commercial classes, and the cost thus entailed on the country is made a grievance on the part of the aristocratic and propertied classes, on account of the taxation which they bring on the country. So far as the charge against our merchants is concerned, I am afraid that many of the residents in China, especially the younger and less experienced of their number, as well as those engaged in the opium trade whether old or young, have often been active promoters of hostilities with that empire. As a rule the Chinese are not a people who attract much sympathy from those who live among them. How could it be otherwise, when they feel no sympathy for others? 'Like begets like.' But it is very short-sighted and unphilosophical conduct to try to cure this ungenial characteristic of a people by violence and injustice, which can only increase the feeling of alienation and repugnance. Yet this is the receipt invariably prescribed in our intercourse with the Chinese as a cure for their insolence, by the *young merchants*; for Sir George Bonham, the former Governor of Hong Kong, draws a distinction between the conduct of the old and substantial houses and the younger residents; the latter are always for 'pitching into the Celestials' by way of making them more civil. By the way, I am afraid the prospect of a sudden increase of trade, which always follows a war expenditure *for a time*, is not without its influence on these young houses, to say nothing of the enormous profits which have been made out of the claims for compensation for losses of property incurred during the war. Now none of these motives can have any sway with the merchants and manufacturers of Lancashire, who are the parties principally 1861. ÆT. 57.

1861. Æt. 57. interested in a permanent trade with China. All they can desire is that the duties shall be moderate, the trade regular, and that facilities shall be afforded at the ports of entry for the quick despatch of business. All these conditions exist in China to as great an extent as in any other considerable maritime states. Indeed, comparing our trade with China with that with our own possessions in India, it seems likely that the duties payable in the former will soon be the lighter of the two! Now all this leads me to press on you and the other members of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce to take some step for the protection of your interests against the risk of future collisions and wars in that country. The only way of accomplishing this is by discouraging the British Government from entering into closer diplomatic relations, or forcing on that country a resident Ambassador at Pekin, or seeking for free access for our countrymen to the interior of that empire. The last is a very plausible but most perilous situation. The idea of Englishmen 'opening up a trade' in the interior of China commends itself strongly to those who do not know how commerce is carried on. But any one acquainted with the trade of Russia or other countries in a low state of civilization, and speaking a peculiar and difficult language, knows that it is impossible for foreigners to carry on the interior trade of those countries. It must all be left to natives. There is a proposal for carrying our productions in English ships up the great arterial river of that country into the interior. Now this would be totally at variance with all international law, unless the trade were confined to some one or more ports of entry to be agreed upon. But once let an English trading steamer find itself 500 or 1000 miles in the interior of China, and how could you hope to prevent irregular trade taking place, to be followed by constant collisions with local authorities, who would, no doubt, be exposed to a system of bribery by which

the smuggler would only supersede the regular trader at the ports? Even the stipulation for foreigners to be allowed to penetrate into the country by means of passports is, in my opinion, a policy of very doubtful wisdom. Missionaries will then, no doubt, avail themselves of the facility for travelling in safety into the country. I have the most profound veneration for those, who, like St. Paul, preach the gospel at their own risk, trusting for their safety solely to the purity of their motives and the overruling protection of God. But it is different when a missionary goes forth with all the force of a powerful Government at his back; in such a case he is likely to do far more injury than service to the cause of Christianity. The present war, so far as the French are concerned, arose out of the alleged murder of a Roman Catholic priest in China; and if missionaries are to travel through that country with passports, it will, I fear, lead to as many wars as conversions. There is another point to be considered. Our cruisers on the coast of China are frequently capturing or destroying junks, on the plea that they are pirates. There is a bad practice of paying head-money for these pirates, taken or destroyed. I think there is a wanton destruction of life sometimes committed without sufficient proof of the character of the parties. In my opinion we ought not to undertake to perform the duties of police on the coast, *unless to protect our own vessels*, or at least those of European origin. In this respect we ought to follow the example of United States cruisers—watch over the security of national property, leave the Chinese to protect their own shipping. The truth is, our opium smugglers and our wars with the Government of China, lead to a state of carelessness on the coast, and we then step in to preserve the peace in Chinese waters, in consequence of the impotence of the authorities to perform the duties of police."

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On Lord Brougham.

"*Midhurst, August* 21, 1861. (*To M. Chevalier.*)—I have read with much pleasure your address to the Social Science Meeting at Dublin. If you have a corrected copy in French, let me have one. I was amused at your diplomacy in comparing Brougham to Cicero. This must have delighted him. He has, I suspect, always had the great Roman in his eye, and has sought to imitate him in the universality of his accomplishments. But it was one thing to be universal 1900 years ago, and is another thing now. A Bolton mechanic who makes a steam engine, or one who drives a locomotive on our railways, knows more in his special calling than either Cicero or Brougham. It is this attempt at universality which has been the great error and failing of Lord B.'s public life. He has touched everything and finished nothing. Had he given his vast powers to one thing at a time, he might have codified our laws, and endowed every village with a good school, besides leaving nothing for me to do in Free Trade. But he made a speech for five hours on Law Reform forty years ago nearly, and another as long on National Education, and then he left those questions for something else. The result will be that in fifty years he will be remembered only for his herculean mental powers, and his unrivalled intellectual industry, but his name will not be specially associated with any reforms for which posterity will hold him in grateful remembrance."[8]

[8] Brougham, as has been seen, had been very unfriendly to the League (see vol. i. p. 262). For many years there was no communication between him and Mr. Bright. With Cobden he kept up an occasional correspondence, and in 1856, when Mr. Bright was ill, Brougham, says Cobden in a letter of that date, "wrote to me speaking in the most affectionate terms of Bright, and offering him the use of his house at Cannes. I sent the letter to Bright, who of course met his advances with open arms, and they have been exchanging great civilities. He seems anxious to heal all his ancient enmities. Could a better use be made of his declining years?" —*To G. Moffatt, June 4, 1856.*

Inconvenience of a sectarian organ.

"*Midhurst, October* 17, 1861. (*To S. Lucas.*)—I said in one of my notes to you that the *Star* should not appear the organ of a sect. I will give you an illustration *à propos* of this remark. In an otherwise excellent and tolerant article on Lord John yesterday, you bring in Bright and myself at the close to sting him by our contrast. This is the kind of remark which stamps your paper as the organ of a strait sect which tolerates nothing but what comes from your own preachers. You remember the anecdote I gave you of a person I travelled with in the railway carriage from Guildford to London, when he bought the *Telegraph* and I the *Star*. He remarked, 'I don't like the *Star*, it is so intolerant; it never admits anybody to be right but Bright and Cobden.' I should like to make a bargain with you in the interest of your paper, not to let my name appear in your leaders (unless to find fault with me) for two years."

Tocqueville on the right of Secession.

"*June* 22, 1861. (*To W. Hargreaves, Esq.*)—I am glad to see that as yet there is no serious fighting in America. Until there has been a bloody collision, one may hope there will be none. I have been reading Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. In his chapter on the influence of slavery his sagacity is, as it frequently is, quite prophetic. He seems to regard it as the chief danger to the Union, less from the rival interests it creates, than from the incompatibility of manners which it produces. It is singular too that he takes the Southern view of the right of secession. He says, 'The Union was formed by the voluntary agreement of the States; and in uniting together they have not forfeited their nationality, nor have they been reduced to one and the same people. If one of the States chose to

1861. withdraw its name from the contract, it would be difficult
Æt. 57. to disprove its right of doing so; and the Federal Government would have no means of maintaining its claims either by force or by right.' He then goes on to argue that among the States united by the Federal tie there may be some which have a great interest in maintaining the Union on which their prosperity depends; and he then remarks—'Great things may then be done in the name of the Federal Government, but in reality that Government will have ceased to exist.' Has he not accurately anticipated both the fact and the motive of the present attitude of the State of New York? Is it not commercial gain and mercantile ascendency which prompt their warlike zeal for the Federal Government? At all events, it is a little unreasonable in the New York politicians to require *us* to treat the South as rebels, in the face of the opinion of our highest European authority as to the right of secession."

The Trent Affair.

"*Midhurst, Dec.* 3, 1861. (*To Lieut.-Col. Fitzmayer.*)— . . . . In reference to our latest complication with the United States, it is I hope possible the Government at Washington may disavow the act of their officer.[9] If not, it will I expect be nothing more than a diplomatic and legal wrangle. I think, however, the American Government are very foolish to take such a course. I confess I have not much opinion of Seward. He is a kind of American Thiers or Palmerston or Russell—and talks to Bunkum. Fortu-

[9] Messrs. Slidell and Mason, two Commissioners from the Confederate States to Europe, were passengers on board the West India mail steamer *Trent*. Captain Wilkes, of the United States war-vessel *San Jacinto*, stopped the *Trent* by firing a shot across her bows, took the Commissioners forcibly out of her, and sailed away with them (Nov. 8). After an interchange of correspondence between Lord Russell and Mr. Seward, and the despatch of British troops to Halifax, the men were given up, and reached England on January 29. (See Irving's *Annals*, p. 614.)

nately, my friend Mr. Charles Sumner, who is Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, and has really a kind of veto on the acts of Seward, is a very peaceable and safe man. 1861. ÆT. 75.

"I look upon it as quite impossible that the North in addition to their life and death struggle at home can desire a rupture with this country. It is to assume that they are mad. Doubtless there are plenty of Irish and plenty of Southern sympathizers in the Northern States, who would be delighted with a war with England. But ninety-nine hundredths of the honest citizens of the North must above all things desire to avoid a quarrel with us at the present moment, and they will I fear only interpret our accusation of a contrary design as a proof that we wish to pick a quarrel with them.

"Nothing is more clear to me than that the world is underrating in this struggle the power of the North. I have paid two visits to that country at an interval of twenty-four years between the first and second trip. I do not believe anybody without two such visits can form an idea of the power and resources and the rapid town growth of that people. As for the Slave States I look upon them as doomed in any case to decay and almost barbarism. If Christianity is to survive, there can be no future for slavery. But those Free States where slavery is prohibited will in all human probability contain more than one hundred millions of people in the lifetime of persons now born. Is it wise with us who have an India, as they have their slaves, to give cause to that great future nation to remember with feelings of hatred and revenge our successors to remote generations? Ought not we most carefully and generously to guard ourselves against the possibility of being shown hereafter to have taken advantage of the North in the hour of its trial?

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"Upon the whole I do not complain of our Government, nor do I think the Americans can fairly charge us as a nation with having failed to bear with fortitude and temper the great suffering the civil war has inflicted on our cotton trade. It is true we have our *Times* as the Americans have their *Herald*, and the twin incendiaries may pair off together."

"*Midhurst, Dec.* 6, 1861. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—Your admirable address cannot fail to do good.[1] But it is a mad world we live in! Here am I in the midst of extracts from Hansard, &c., to show up the folly or worse of the men who have been putting us to millions of expense to protect us from a *coup de main* from France, and now we see the same people willing to rush into war with America, and leave us exposed to this crafty and dangerous neighbour! Might we not be justified in turning hermits, letting our beards grow, and returning to our caves! . . .

"Has it occurred to you that this war is now nearly a year old, and the South has rather gained than receded on the Potomac, having stopped the navigation to the Federal capital? How long will foreign powers look on if nothing decisive be done? I doubt whether another year's blockade will be borne by the world. What say you? If you agree, you should let Sumner know. My own conviction is that if there is to be no early compromise and settlement between North and South, and if the North do not voluntarily raise the blockade, there will next year be an intervention in some shape. A Bordeaux merchant came here to me a few days ago. He says the export of wine and spirits from that port to New Orleans was 30,000 tuns per annum, which is cut off to a gallon. He says also that their trade in liquors and fruits with New York, &c., is nearly destroyed by the Morrill tariff. He tells me the feeling is very bitter in France, and

[1] Mr. Bright spoke on the *Trent* Affair and on the American War generally, at Rochdale, December 4, 1861.—*Speeches*, i. 167.

that the Emperor would be supported if he were to join England in breaking up the blockade. France has a far greater stake in the *export* trade to the South than England, owing to her old connexion with New Orleans." 1861. ÆT. 57.

"*Midhurst, Dec.* 14, 1861. (*To M. Chevalier.*)—There is considerable reaction in the public mind, I think, on the American question. Some large public meetings have passed resolutions in favour of arbitration; and the religious congregations have been also making demonstrations for peace. I expect the Americans will propose either to restore the *status quo,* and let the United States Admiralty Courts decide, or else refer to arbitration. I hope the Emperor will offer his mediation if an opportunity occurs. Neither party will be in the humour to refuse. It is high time that we had a revision of these so-called international maritime laws. They are merely traps laid for nations to fall into wars. I do not believe in a war. Palmerston likes to drive the wheel close to the edge, and show how dexterously he can avoid falling over the precipice. Meantime he keeps people's attention employed, which suits him politically. But I hope this game is nearly played out. I am quite sick of it."

"*Jan.,* 1862. (*To Mr. Paulton.*)—Palmerston ought to be turned out for the reckless expense to which he has put us. He and his colleagues knew there could be no war. From the moment they were informed of the course France, Prussia, and Austria were taking in giving us their moral support (and they knew this early in December), a war was, as they knew, impossible. Then came Seward's despatch to Adams on the 19th December, which virtually settled the matter. To keep alive the wicked passions in this country as Palmerston and his *Post* did, was like the man, and that is the worst that can be said of it.

"I can't see my way through the American business. I don't believe the North and South can ever lie in the same

1861. bed again. Nor do I see how the military operations can
ÆT. 57. be carried into the South, so as to inflict a crushing defeat. Unless something of the kind takes place, I predict that Europe will recognize the independence of the South. I tell Sumner this, and tell him that his only chance if he wants time to fight it out, is to raise the blockade of the Mississippi voluntarily, and then Europe might look on.

But our friend Bright will not hear of anything against the claims of the North. I admire his pluck, for when he goes with a side it is always to win. I tell him that it is possible to wish well to a cause without being sure that it will be successful. However, he will soon find in the House that we shall be on this question as we were on China, Crimean, and Greek Pacifico wars, quite in a minority! There is no harm in that if you are right, but it is useless to deceive ourselves about the issue. Three-fourths of the House will be glad to find an excuse for voting for the dismemberment of the great Republic."

"*Nov.* 29, 1861. (*To Mr. Charles Sumner*).—I hear that the law officers of the Crown have decided that you are not within the law in what has been done. I leave your lawyers to answer ours. The question of legality in matters of international law has never been very easily settled. However, the only danger to the peace of the two countries is in the temper which may grow out of this very trivial incident. The Press will, as usual, try to envenom the affair. It is for us and all who care for the interests of humanity, to do our utmost to thwart these mischief-makers. You may reckon on Bright, myself, and all our friends being alert and active in this good work, and we reckon on the co-operation of yourself and all who sympathize with you. Though I said in my other letter that I shall never care to utter a word about the merits of a war after it has begun, I do not the less feel it my duty to try to prevent hostilities occurring. Let me

here remark that I cannot understand how you should have thought it worth your while at Washington to have re-opened this question of the right of search, by claiming to exercise it in a doubtful case and a doubtful manner, under circumstances which could be of so little advantage, and to have incurred the risk of greater disadvantages. The capture of Mason and Slidell can have little effect in discouraging the South, compared with the indirect encouragement and hope it may hold out to them of embroiling your Government with England. I am speaking with reference to the policy, and leaving out of sight the law of the case. But in the latter view we are rather unprepared to find you exercising in a strained manner the right of search, inasmuch as you have been supposed to be always the opponents of the practice. I was under the impression that our Government was told pretty plainly at the outbreak of the Crimean War that it would be risking the peace of this country with yours if we claimed the right of search in the open sea. I am not in a position to know how far this was the case. Can you tell me if there be any documents on the subject? If it were so, we should, of course, all unite in holding you to your own doctrine.

P.S.—Since writing the accompanying, we have the details of the capture of Mason and Slidell in our packet vessel. You may be right in point of law, though, perhaps, in technical strictness, the lawyers may pick a hole. *But I am satisfied you are wrong in point of policy*. There is an impression, I know, in high quarters here, that Mr. Seward wishes to quarrel with this country. This seems absurd enough. I confess I have as little confidence in him as I have in Lord Palmerston. Both will consult Bunkum for the moment, without much regard, I fear, for the future. You must not lose sight of this view of the relations of the two countries. Formerly England feared a war with the

United States as much from the dependence on your cotton as from a dread of your power. *Now* the popular opinion (however erroneous) is that a war would give us cotton. And we, of course, consider your power weakened by your civil war. I speak as a friend of peace, and not as a partisan of my own country, in wishing you to bear this in mind."

"*Dec.* 6, 1861.—Since writing my letter of yesterday's date, I have read General Scott's admirable letter. It contains a passage to the following effect: 'I am sure that the President and people of the United States would be but too happy to let these men go free, unnatural and unpardonable as their offences have been, if by it they could emancipate the commerce of the world. Greatly as it would be to our disadvantage at this present crisis to surrender any of those maritime privileges of belligerents which are sanctioned by the laws of nations, I feel that I take no responsibility in saying that the United States will be faithful to her traditional policy upon this subject, and to the spirit of her political institutions.'"

"*Dec.* 12, 1861.—The *Times* and its yelping imitators are still doing their worst, but there is a powerful moderate party. I hope you will offer promptly to arbitrate the question. There is one point on which you must absolutely define your platform. You must acknowledge the South as belligerents to give you a standing-ground on the Trent affair. Some of your newspapers argue that you have a right to carry off a *rebel* from an English vessel, which means that Austria might have seized Kossuth under similar circumstances. Were you to take such ground, there would be war."

"*Dec.* 19, 1861.—Everybody tells me that war is inevitable, and yet I do not believe in war. But it must be admitted that there are things said and done on your side

that make it very difficult for the advocates of peace on this side to keep the field. We can get over the sayings of your *Herald* that 'France will not and England *dare* not go to war.' Your newspapers will not drive us into war. But when grave men (or men that should be grave), holding the highest posts in your cultivated State of Massachusetts, compliment Captain Wilkes for having given an affront to the British lion, it makes it very hard for Bright and me to contend against the 'British lion party' in this country. All I can say is that I hope you have taken Bright's advice, and offered unconditional arbitration. With that offer publicly made, the friends of peace could prevent our fire-eaters from assaulting you, always providing that your public speakers do not put it out of our power to keep the peace. I was sorry to see a report of an anti-English speech by your colleague at New York. Honestly speaking, and with no blind patriotism to mislead me, I don't think the nation here behaved badly under the terrible evil of loss of trade and danger of starving under your blockade. Of course all privileged classes and aristocracies hate your institutions—that is natural enough; but the mass of the people never went with the South. I am not pleased with your project of sinking stones to block up ports. That is barbarism. It is quite natural that, smarting as you do under an unprovoked aggression from the slave-owners, you should even be willing to smother them like hornets in their nest. But don't forget the outside world, and especially don't forget that the millions in Europe are more interested even than their princes in preserving the future commerce with the vast region of the Confederate States."

"*Jan.* 23, 1862.—It is, perhaps, well that you settled the matter of sending away the men at once. Consistently with your own principles, you could not have justified their

1862. detention. But it is right you should know that there was
Æt. 58. a great reaction going on through this country against the diabolical tone of the *Times* and *Post*. (I suspect stock-jobbing in these quarters.) The cry of arbitration had been raised and responded to, and I was glad to see the religious people once more in the field in favour of peace. Be assured if you had offered to refer the question to arbitration, there could not have been a meeting called in England that would not have endorsed it. The only question was whether we ought to be the first to offer arbitration. I mean this was the only doubt in the popular mind. As regards our Government, they are, of course, feeling the tendency of public opinion. A friend of mine in London, a little behind the scenes, wrote to me:—'They are busy at the Foreign Office hunting up precedents for arbitration, very much against their will.' I write all this because I wish you to know that we are not quite so bad as appeared at first on the surface."

In the same letter, after arguing for the raising of the blockade by the North, he says:—

"All the reflection I have been able to give the subject confirms me in the view I expressed in my former letter. Propose to Europe a clean sweep of the old maritime law of Vattel, Puffendorf, and Co.; abolish blockades of commercial ports on the ground laid down in Cass's despatch which you sent. Get rid of the right of search in time of war as in time of peace, and make private property exempt from capture by armed vessels of every kind, whether government vessels or privateers. And, as an earnest of your policy, offer to apply the doctrine in your present war. You would instantly gain France and all the continent of Europe to your side. You would enlist a party in England that can always control our governing class when there is a sufficient motive for action; and you would acquire such a moral

position that no power would dream of laying hands on you. I think I told you that all our commercial and trading community have already pronounced in favour of exempting private property from capture by government ships, as first proposed by Mr. Marcy. In the ensuing session of Parliament I intend to make a speech on the subject of maritime law, in which I will undertake to prove that we, above all other countries, are interested in carrying out all the above three propositions of reform. With the exception of the aristocratic classes, who have an instinctive leaning for any policy which furnishes excuses for large naval and military establishments, everybody will be favourable to the change."

Maritime Law.

"*Midhurst, Feb.* 2. (*To A. W. Paulton.*)—I hope to see you on Wednesday evening. I have an idea (about which we can talk) of occupying ground in the House upon the subject of rights of neutrals by giving notice early of something of this kind: 'That in the opinion of the House the questions affecting belligerent rights and the rights of neutrals are in an unsatisfactory state, and demand the early attention of her Majesty's Government.'

"A Committee on Shipping in 1860 reported in favour of adopting Marcy's plan of exempting private property altogether from capture by Government ships as well as privateers, but nothing was done.

"Now, I think such a motion must be agreed to, because all parties are dissatisfied with matters as they were left at Paris in 1856. In my speech I should advocate:—

"1st. The making of private property sacred from capture by armed ships of all kinds.

"2nd. Exempting neutral ships from search or visitation in time of war as in time of peace.

1862. "3rd. The abolition of blockade of commercial ports or
Æt. 58. coast-lines.

"I could make it clear that England is beyond all countries interested in carrying out these points.

"Have you been reading anything about International Law? If so, give me the benefit of your observations. What I shall want is standing-ground to show the absolute necessity for a change. Are there not great discrepancies between Lord John's present doctrines and our former supposed principles? For instance I thought all our authorities, including Phillimore's last book, agreed that a belligerent could take a neutral ship *anywhere*, and carry her into port for adjudication."

The Commercial Class.

"*Feb.* 7, 1862. (*To Mr. Henry Ashworth.*)—I am quite happy to see you at the head of the Chamber of Commerce. With many faults and shortcomings, our mercantile and manufacturing classes as represented in the Chambers of Commerce are after all the only power in the State possessed of wealth and political influence sufficient to counteract in some degree the feudal governing class of this country. They are, indeed, the only class from whom we can in our time hope for any further beneficial changes.

"It is true they are often timid and servile in their conduct towards the aristocracy, and we must wink at their weaknesses if we are to keep them political company. But there is always this encouragement to hope better things—that they have no interest opposed to the general good, whilst, on the contrary, the feudal governing class exists only by the violation of sound principles of political economy, and therefore the very institution is hostile to the interests of the masses.

"I wish we could inspire the mercantile manufacturing

community with a little more self-respect. The future of 1862.
England must depend on them, for, as Deacon Hume said Æt. 58.
twenty years ago, we have long passed the time when the prosperity of this country depended on its land, and yet how little share this all-important interest claims in the government of the country."

Maritime Law in the House of Commons.

"*Feb.* 14, 1862. (*To M. Chevalier.*)—I have not yet secured an evening for my motion. We have to ballot for the first chance, and there are always a good many candidates at the commencement of the session. I intend to move the resolution on the other side. If this be affirmed by the House, as I have no doubt it will be, the Government will be obliged to take some steps in the matter, and when once they begin, I defy them to stop without completing my programme.

"P.S.—Mr. Cobden to move:—

That the present state of international maritime law, as affecting the rights of belligerents and neutrals, is ill-defined and unsatisfactory, and calls for the attention of her Majesty's Government.

"But I fear it will be some weeks before I can secure an evening."

"*March* 4. („)—After I had given notice of my motion in the House, Mr. Horsfall, the Tory M.P. for Liverpool, complained that I was poaching on his domain, as he had announced his intention in the previous session to bring the subject of maritime law before Parliament. On referring back to the proceedings of last year, I found he was correct, and as it is a sort of etiquette in the House not to encroach on each other's territory, I yielded at once. Mr. Horsfall has adopted my exact words, and I shall second his motion. The debate stands for next Tuesday, the 11th. I am very

1862. well satisfied that Mr. Horsfall originates the motion, as it
ÆT. 58. will give a better chance of success, the Tories being less likely to oppose one of their own party than me. By the way, Lindsay says he thinks there is now a majority in the House in favour of exempting private property from capture. The question respecting blockades is quite new, but with a little discussion we shall carry that point; and I am still convinced that if the Emperor will propose the three points which I quoted in a former letter, we can compel our government very shortly to acquiesce."

"*March* 17. („)—In all my political life I have never suffered a more vexatious disappointment than in being prevented from speaking last Monday. I had taken great trouble to prepare, and should have had a good opportunity of being universally read in the papers, for much attention has been called to my intention to speak. But I was seized with a sudden hoarseness arising from a cold, and on Monday was unable to articulate. The consequence was that the debate to my mind was kept to too narrow a basis. However, enough was said and admitted on all sides to prove that we cannot remain where we are, and as nobody seriously proposes to go back, it is quite clear we must go forward. I am convinced that the result will be, after the usual agitation out of doors, that public opinion in England will pronounce for a complete revolution in the maritime law. We have more to gain than any other people from the complete removal of all restrictions on freedom of commerce whether in time of peace or war. But we have our battle to fight as usual with our own feudal governing class. I am writing this in my bedroom, and cannot, therefore, say much. As respects the postage question, I will not lose sight of it."[2]

[2] The debate was resumed on March 17 by Mr. Lindsay, who began by expressing a hope that Cobden would be able to speak before the end of

"*Athenæum, London, March* 18. („)—You will see that we are in the midst of a debate on the maritime law, and you may have remarked that Palmerston has seized the opportunity before the discussion was over to declare his opposition to the change affecting private property of belligerents at sea. I am not surprised at this; for a man of seventy-seven, whose ideas are stereotyped on the model of half a century ago, is not likely to favour any measure in harmony with the age in which we live. But I am not the less certain that these changes in maritime law to which I alluded before, will be adopted by this country. It takes time with us English people to make up our minds, but when great material interests can be appealed to on the side of principles of freedom and humanity, the eventual result in this country is not doubtful. It is a terrible evil to find ourselves with an old man of seventy-seven at our head, and I am more and more convinced that any change from this state of things will be an advantage.

Lord Palmerston.

"*Midhurst, August* 7, 1862. (*To Mr. Hargreaves.*)—I have found your letter on coming here. If Bright could have been by my side during the last six weeks of the Session, I think we could have silenced Palmerston. He had laid himself open to attack, and the events of the Session had made him very vulnerable. However, I hope I have spoilt his game as a popular demagogue a little for the recess. But he has a terrible run of good luck; and then I am afraid of the tricks he may be allowed by his obsequious colleagues to play before we meet again. Nothing could be so unfavourable to the public interest as the

the evening. His hoarseness, however, remained intractable, and Mr. Bright spoke instead.

1862. present state of parties. Palmerston is spending many
Æt. 58. millions more than the Tories would dream of spending. He pampers the 'services' to such a degree that they draw off all opposition from Dizzy's party, so that there is no check on anything he does. There was literally no opposition last Session. Then Gladstone lends his genius to all sorts of expenditure which he disapproves, and devises schemes for raising money which nobody else would think of. Thus he gets the funds for fortifications by a system of loans, which tends to keep the waste out of the annual accounts. If the money had to be raised out of the taxes, we could resist it. In the same spirit he goes into China wars, and keeps a Dr. and Cr. account, deluding himself and the public with the idea that these wars are at the expense of the Chinese, whereas for every million we get from that country we spend at least as much in increased cost of establishments there; and it seems more and more doubtful whether much more will be got on any terms. How we are to accomplish the change I know not, but it would be a great gain to the public if we could carry the Liberals to the Opposition side of the House. It seems as if the Tories were determined not to let *their* leaders into office. They are too well satisfied with things as they are. Well they may be!"

Commercial Blockades.

"*August* 7, 1862. (*To M. Chevalier.*)—Our Government, as you know, is constantly declaring that *we* have the greatest interest in maintaining the old system of belligerent rights. Lord Russell considers that we must preserve the right of blockade as a most valuable privilege for ourselves on some future occasion, and you will see that almost the very last words uttered by Lord Palmerston at the close of the Session were to assert the great interest England had in

maintaining these old belligerent rights. In fact we are governed by men whose ideas have made no progress since 1808—nay, they cling to the ideas of the middle ages!" 1862. Æt. 58.

"*Manchester, Oct.* 25, 1862. („)—England cannot take a step with decency or consistency, to put an end to the blockade, until our Government is prepared to give in their adhesion to the *principle* of the abolition of commercial blockades for the future. This our antiquated Palmerstons and Russells are not willing to do. They have a sincere faith in the efficacy of commercial blockades as a belligerent weapon against our enemies. They are ignorant that it is a two-edged sword, which cuts the hand that wields it—when that hand is England—more than the object which it strikes. Lords Palmerston and Russell feel bound to acquiesce in the blockade, and even to find excuses for it, because they wish to preserve the right for us of blockading some other power.

"I am against any act of violence to put an end to the war. We should not thereby obtain cotton, nor should we coerce the North. We should only intensify the animosity between the two sections. But I should be glad to see an appeal made by all Europe to the North to put an end to the blockade of the South against legitimate commerce, on the ground of humanity, accompanied with the offer of making the abolition of commercial blockades the principle of international law for the future. But this, I repeat, our own Government will not agree to at present. We have a battle to fight against our own ruling class in England to accomplish this reform. I am by no means so sure as Gladstone that the South will ever be a nation. It depends on the "Great West." If Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota sustain the President's anti-slavery proclamation, there will be no peace which will leave the mouth of the Mississippi in the hands of an inde-

1862. pendent power. A few days will tell us how these elections
ÆT. 58. will go."

The Cotton Famine.

"*Nov.* 6, 1862. (*To Lady Hatherton*).—Few people can realize the appalling state of things in this neighbourhood. Imagine that the iron, stone, and coal were suddenly withheld from Staffordshire, and it gives you but an imperfect idea of what Lancashire, with its much larger population, is suffering from the want of cotton; it reverses the condition of the richest county in the kingdom, and makes it the poorest. A capitalist with 20,000*l.* invested in buildings and machinery, may be almost on a par with his operatives in destitution, if he be deprived of the raw material which alone makes his capital productive. Bad as is the state of things, I fear we are only at its commencement, and unhappily the winter is upon us to aggravate the sufferings of the working people. The evil is spreading through all classes. The first effects will be felt on the small shopkeepers; the weak millowners will come next. I met a magistrate yesterday from Oldham, and he told me that at the last meeting of the Bench four thousand assessments were exempted from payment of poor rates on the plea of inability of the parties to pay! How rapidly this must aggravate the pressure on the remainder of the property of the Union! There will be another meeting of the Manchester Committee next Monday, at which it will be proposed to extend it to a *National* Committee, and the Queen will be solicited as Duchess of Lancaster to allow her name to appear as its patron. An energetic effort will then be made to cover the whole kingdom with local committees, and then institute a general canvass for subscriptions. By this means we may keep matters in tolerable order till Parliament meets, but there is a growing opinion that we shall have to apply to Parliament

for imperial aid. People at a distance, who learn that the poor rates in Lancashire are even now less than they are in ordinary times in the agricultural districts, cannot understand this helplessness and destitution. They do not perceive how exceptional this state of things is. Lancashire, with its machinery stopped, is like a man in a fainting fit. It would be as rational to attempt to draw money from the one as blood from the other. Or it may be compared to a strong man suddenly struck with paralysis; until the use of his limbs and muscles be restored to him, it is useless to tell him to help himself."

Debate on Turkey.

"*London, June* 2, 1863. (*To M. Chevalier.*)—We had a debate in the House on the Turkish question last Friday, *à propos* of the bombardment of Belgrade by the Turks.[2] I took a part, and send you enclosed an extract from my speech, in which I alluded to the policy which ought to be pursued in the East on the part of France and England. As you will see, the doctrine, though somewhat new to the House, was very well received. I was very much struck with the altered feeling towards the Turks. They have not a friend, except Palmerston and his partial imitator, Layard. Pal-

[2] When Servia acquired what was practically her independence, Belgrade was one of five fortresses which the Turks continued to occupy. In the summer of 1862 an affray, such as was frequent enough, took place between some Servian citizens in Belgrade, and some soldiers of the Turkish garrison in the citadel. The Turkish Pasha proceeded to bombard the town, and European diplomacy was once more stirred by the relations between Turkey and her dependencies. In the debate in the House of Commons, May 29, 1863, Mr. Layard made an elaborate defence of the condition and prospects of the Turkish Government. Cobden replied in a particularly able statement of the case against Turkey and the traditional policy of the British Foreign Office. To this Mr. Gladstone replied in turn, not taking Mr. Layard's line, but rather deprecating "a general crusade against Turkey," and hoping for the best.—*Hansard*, clxxi. p. 126, etc.

1863. merston was absent from the debate owing to a slight
ÆT. 59. attack of gout. Gladstone was obliged to speak in reply to me, but he did it with evident reluctance. There will be no more Crimean wars for us in defence of the Turks. Should a Slavonic or Hellenic Garibaldi arise to wage war with the Ottoman oppressor, British public opinion will instantly leap to his side, and then our Foreign Office will instantly turn its back upon its old traditions, as it did in the case of Italy. There is no demagogue like our high officials for flattering and bowing to the popular passion of the hour!"

The Polish Insurrection.

"*June* 22, 1863. („)—My dear friend, I do not understand what good can come from an interference by force of arms in the Polish business.[1] I can see how very great injury could arise to ourselves. We draw food for two or three millions of our people yearly from Russia. If your nation goes into such a war it will of course be with the hope of getting some extension of territory out of the squabble. That would no doubt be the case. Germany would fall into confusion, and another 'confederation' would arise, in which France would of course have a voice, and her good will must be propitiated by a concession on the Rhine. To this *I* have no objection. But our Foreign Office would go into convulsions at such an audacious rupture of its cherished traditions. Then as we are not in want of further territory, and could not therefore share in the spoil, the danger is that we should quarrel with you. I hope the chimerical scheme will not be persevered in."

[1] In the beginning of 1863, in consequence of the shameless brutality of the Russian conscription, an insurrection had broken out in Poland. The Emperor of the French proposed that our Government should join him in remonstrating with Prussia for aiding Russia. Lord Palmerston, however, for once took Cobden's view, and "declined to fall into the trap."

The American War.

"*July* 11, 1862. (*To Mr. Sumner.*)—It is a long time since I wrote to you. Indeed, to confess the truth, it is a painful task for me to keep up my correspondence with my American friends. But I have not been a less anxious observer of the events which have passed on your side. I shall now best serve the interests of humanity by telling you frankly the state and progress of opinion here. There is an all but unanimous belief that you *cannot* subject the South to the Union. Even they who are your partisans and advocates cannot see their way to any such issue. It is necessary that you should understand that this opinion is so widely and honestly entertained, because it is the key to the expression of views which might otherwise not be quite intelligible. Among some of the governing class in Europe the wish is father to this thought. But it is not so with the mass of the people. Nor is it so with our own Government entirely. I *know* that Gladstone would restore your Union to-morrow if he could; yet he has steadily maintained from the first that unless there was a strong Union sentiment, it is impossible that the South can be subdued. Now the belief is all but universal that there is no Union feeling in the South; and this is founded latterly upon the fact that no cotton comes from New Orleans. It is said that if the instinct of gain, with cotton at double its usual price, do not induce the people to sell, it is a proof beyond dispute that the political resentment is overwhelming and unconquerable."

"*Feb.* 13, 1863. (*To Mr. Sumner.*)—If I have not written to you before, it is not because I have been indifferent to what is passing in your midst. I may say sincerely that my thoughts have been almost as much on American as on English politics. But I could do you no service, and shrank from occupying your over-taxed attention, even for a moment.

1863. My object in now writing is to speak of a matter which has
ÆT. 59. a practical bearing on your affairs. You know how much alarmed I was from the first lest our Government should interfere in your affairs. The disposition of our ruling class, and the necessities of our cotton trade, pointed to some act of intervention; and the indifference of the great mass of our population to your struggle, the object of which they did not foresee and understand, would have made intervention easy, and indeed popular, if you had been a weaker naval power. This state of feeling existed up to the announcement of the President's Emancipation Policy. From that moment our old anti-slavery feeling began to arouse itself, and it has been gathering strength ever since. The great rush of the public to all the public meetings called on the subject shows how wide and deep the sympathy for personal freedom still is in the breasts of our people. I know nothing in my political experience so striking, as a display of spontaneous public action, as that of the vast gathering at Exeter Hall, when, without one attraction in the form of a popular orator, the vast building, its minor rooms and passages, and the streets adjoining, were crowded with an enthusiastic audience. That meeting has had a powerful effect on our newspapers and politicians. It has closed the mouths of those who have been advocating the side of the South. And I now write to assure you that any unfriendly act on the part of our Government—no matter which of our aristocratic parties is in power—towards your cause, is not to be apprehended. If an attempt were made by the Government in any way to commit us to the South, a spirit would be instantly aroused which would drive that Government from power. This, I suppose, will be known and felt by the Southern agents in Europe, and if communicated to their Government, must, I should think, operate as a great discouragement to them."

"*April* 2, 1863. („)—There are certain things which can be done and others which cannot be done by our Government. We are bound to do our best to prevent any ship-of-war being built for the Confederate Government, for a ship-of-war can only be used or owned legitimately by a government. But with munitions of war the case is different. They are bought and sold by private merchants for the whole world, and it is not in the power of governments to prevent it. Besides, your own Government have laid down repeatedly the doctrine that it is no part of the duty of governments to interfere with such transactions, for which they are not in any way responsible. I was therefore very sorry that Mr. Adams had persisted in raising an objection to these transactions, in which, by the way, the North has been quite as much involved as the South. If you have read the debate in the House on the occasion when Mr. Forster brought on the subject last week, you will see how Sir Roundell Palmer, the Solicitor-General, and Mr. Laird the ship-builder, availed themselves of this opening to divert attention from the real question at issue—the building of war-ships to the question of selling munitions of war, in which latter practice it was shown that you in the North were the great participators."

"*May* 2, 1863. („)—I am in no fear whatever of any rupture between the two countries arising out of the blockade, or the incendiary language of the politicians or the Press on both sides of the Atlantic, though these may help to precipitate matters on another issue. But the fitting out of privateers to prey on your commerce, and to render valueless your mercantile tonnage, is another and more serious matter. Great material interests are at stake, and unless this evil can be put down the most serious results may follow. Now I have reason to know that our Government fully appreciates the gravity of this matter. Lord

1863. Russell, whatever may be the tone of his ill-mannered
ÆT. 59. despatches, is sincerely alive to the necessity of putting an end to the equipping of ships of war in our harbours to be used against the Federal Government by the Confederates. He was *bonâ fide* in his desire to prevent the Alabama from leaving, but he was tricked, and was angry at the escape of that vessel. It is necessary that your Government should know all this; and I hope public opinion in England will be so alive to the necessity of enforcing the law, that there will be no more difficulty in the matter. If Lord Russell's despatches to Mr. Adams are not very civil, he may console himself with the knowledge that the Confederates are still worse treated."

"*May* 22, 1863. („)—I called on Lord Russell, and read every word of your last long indictment against him and Lord Palmerston, to him. He was a little impatient under the treatment, but I got through every word. I did my best to improve on the text in half an hour's conversation. Public opinion is recovering its senses. John Bull, you know, has never before been a neutral when great naval operations have been carried on, and he does not take kindly to the task; but he is becoming graciously reconciled. He also *now* begins to understand that he has acted illegally in applauding those who furnished ships of war to prey on your commerce. It will not be repeated."

"*Midhurst, Aug.* 7, 1863. („)—Though we have given you such good ground of complaint on account of the cruisers which have left our ports, yet you must not forget that we have been the only obstacle to what would have been almost a European recognition of the South. Had England joined France, they would have been followed by probably every other State of Europe, with the exception of Russia. This is what the Confederate agents have been seeking to accomplish. They have pressed recognition on England and

France with persistent energy from the first. I confess that their eagerness for other European intervention in some shape has always given me a strong suspicion of their conscious weakness. But considering how much more we have suffered than other people from the blockade, this abstinence on our part from all diplomatic interference is certainly to our credit, and this I attribute entirely to the honourable attitude assumed by our working population."

"*Midhurst, Jan.* 8, 1863. (*To Mr. Paulton.*)— . . . . Do you remember when that old slave-dealer, the Confederate envoy, breakfasted with you last spring, and we were discussing the vast preparations then making by the Federal government, that he remarked with considerable emphasis, when alluding to the incapacity of the Washington government, 'Sir, I know these men well, and I tell you they are setting in motion a machine which they have not the capacity to control and guide.' I have often thought of the truth of this remark when witnessing the frightful mismanagement at headquarters among the Federals during the last twelve months. If it were not for the negro element I should think it the most wild and chimerical dream that ever entered the human mind to think of subjugating the vast region comprised in the Southern Confederacy. But I have a suspicion that the much-despised 'nigger' is going to play the part of arbiter in this great conflict. Neither party wishes to use him or consult him in the matter. Both parties will tolerate his intervention with about equal disgust. But the North stands in the position of being able to make the first use of some half-million of men who are capable of being drilled into good soldiers, and bear the climate of the battle-ground without the average losses from disease.

"These black troops *in posse* will be more and more the temptation of the North to make the plunge for complete

1863. Æt. 59. emancipation. It is indeed doubtful whether another army of Northern whites could be raised. If the Federal Congress bolt the black dose, and resolve to employ black regiments, it will be the beginning of the end of slavery. Is it not apparently tending to this? I would have rather seen the work done in almost any other way. But the *Devil of battles* will not, I hope, have it all his own way. God will, I hope, snatch something from the carnage to compensate us for this terrible work. And spite of the *Times* and the devil I hope the slave will get his freedom yet."

"*Midhurst, Jan.* 18, 1863. („)— . . . . I join with you in all your horror of this vulgar and unscientific and endless butchery in America. Before the first shot was fired I wrote to Sumner to say that if I were a New Englander I would vote with both hands for a peaceful separation. But since the fighting began I have regarded the matter as beyond the control of reason or moral suasion, and I have endeavoured to keep my mind as free as I could from an all-absorbing interest in the struggle—simply on this utilitarian principle—that I can do no good there, and I want my faculties and energies to try and do something here.

"My only absorbing care in connexion with the civil war is to endeavour to prevent this country from interfering with it. To this end I think the anti-slavery direction in which the war is drifting will be favourable. I am not much afraid of any widespread acts of violence on the part of the negroes. They are generally under religious impressions, and are not naturally ferocious. They will grow unsettled, and some of them unmanageable, and there will be great confusion and swaying to and fro. But though I don't expect them to rise and commit desperate crimes, it is quite evident that Jefferson Davis feels all the force of the emancipation measure as a strategical act. He has allowed

his passions to master him in the eyes of the world, as shown by his proclamation in advance. 1863. ÆT. 59.

"It will be a strange working of God's Providence if the negro turns the scale for the North, after the whites on both sides are exhausted. It is clear that the able-bodied blacks will be a cheap resource for soldiers for the North for Southern stations. I hope you and Hargreaves have agreed not to get into an excitement on the subject.[4] The issue is beyond European or human control now, and will go on to the bitter end."

Visit to the Fortifications.

"*Midhurst, Feb.* 3. („)— . . . . I went last week to Portsmouth to see the fortifications. I spent a couple of days in the neighbourhood. Starting by train from Chichester, I stopped at Havant, where a couple of officers from Portsmouth met me, and we went thence in a fly over the Downs by Portsdown Hill to Fareham, and then from the latter place to Gosport.

"Our road along the downs passed beside the great inland chain of forts covering all the high ground within four or five miles of Portsmouth. It is necessary to see these things to understand them. The South Down forts are not designed for defence against a landing. They, as well as an inner system of forts between the Downs and the sea, are planned on the theory that an enemy has beaten us at sea and landed in force, and having worsted an army on shore, these forts are to prevent the foreign force from taking up a position on the downs, and shelling the docks at four or five miles off. Of course the theory implies that the enemy is free to go elsewhere, and the reasonable inference may be that he would prefer going to London, or at least coming to rob our henroosts who live under the downs! The pro-

[4] Mr. Paulton, like Mr. Lindsay, Mr. Moffatt, and one or two other of Cobden's intimate friends, did not sympathize with the cause of the Union.

1863. ÆT. 59. gramme of course contemplates that our own soldiers are safely ensconced in these forts beneath their casemates, and behind gigantic ditches in the chalk—in fact you never saw such precipitous excavations as these are in the Downs to prevent a foreign army from getting at an English army, whilst the country is at their mercy. I need hardly add that there is not an officer of either service with a head on his shoulders who is under fifty, that does not look with supreme contempt, disgust, and humiliation at these works.

"My companions were Captain Cowper Coles, R.N., the inventor of the cupola ships, and Colonel Williams, of the Marine Artillery, who has a pension for wounds, though a young man.

"I saw all that was going on in the dockyards, and came away with the conviction that we are now wasting our money on iron-cased vessels with broadsides, whilst a new invention is in the field which will entirely supersede them. Captain Coles is building a vessel with four cupolas, or rather is superintending the alteration of one on a principle which it is clear must render broadside guns useless."

"*April* 22, 1863. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—There is a great and growing uneasiness about our relations with the United States, and there is so wide an interest taken by our friends from America—of whom there is an influential gathering just now drawn to this side by an apparent fear of some impending mischief—as well as by English people, that I feel quite oppressed with a sense of the responsibility, and write to say that I entreat you to come to town, if only on Friday to return on Saturday.[6] Besides the confidence you give me when we are together, I feel quite sure that the fact of your being present with the power of reply exerts a restraining influence on Palmerston and the other speakers

[6] This refers to an important speech of Cobden's on the duty of enforcing the Foreign Enlistment Act. It was made on April 24.

on the Treasury bench, and it is especially important that they should be so restrained on this occasion. I hope therefore that you will find yourself in a situation to come for one night."

"*Sept.* 8, 1863. („)—The tide of battle seems to have set in so strongly for the North, that I don't think the friends of freedom need feel any anxiety about the result so far as fighting is concerned. There is, of course, a tremendous difficulty beyond, but there is something more than accident which seems in the long-run to favour the right in this wicked world, and I have a strong persuasion that we may live to see a compensating triumph for humanity as the result of this most gigantic of civil wars.

"I confess I cannot penetrate the mystery of French politics in connexion with the United States question. I suppose the Emperor has been very strongly pressed by Slidell and other interested parties to take some step to encourage the South. His unwise Mexican expedition, about which he must have daily more of doubt and misgiving, has placed him in a false and dangerous position on the continent of North America; and we all know how in public, as in private life, one false step seems only to necessitate another. I have no doubt that his Mexican embarrassment is plied with consummate tact and unscrupulous daring by the Confederate agents. The Richmond government will offer *any* terms for the French alliance. Fortunately they are in such straits themselves, that they have little to offer as a temptation to an ambitious but cautious mind like Napoleon's. The influential people who surround the Emperor, such as Fould and Rouher, are of course opposed to any interference in the American quarrel. . . . . After all, our chief reliance for the maintenance of a non-intervention policy by France and England is not in the merits or justice of that course, but—it is sad to say it—in the tremendous warlike power

1863. Æt. 59. manifested by the free States of America. Some shallow and indiscreet members of our aristocracy exclaimed at the outbreak of the Civil War, 'The Republican bubble has burst;' but the experience of the last two years shows that, whether in peace or war, this Republic, instead of a bubble, is the greatest and most solid fact in all history. . . . . It is to be hoped that gradually our educated mob of the clubs will become, however unwillingly, acquainted with the warlike resources of America. At present, nine out of ten of them are under the complacent delusion that we have the power at any moment to raise the blockade, and effect a peace on the basis of separation. And such is the invulnerable conceit of a large part of our aristocratic middle class, that if such facts as I have given above were published by you or myself, they would be read with incredulity, and we should be denounced as Yankee sympathizers.

"I always take for granted the government will not allow the ironclads to leave Laird's, unless they know their real destination. The progress of the Federal arms will help the Cabinet over some of the legal technicalities of the enlistment act."

"*Midhurst*, *Oct.* 12, 1863. („)—I have nothing to say, but that Mr. Whiting, who is here as successor to Mr. Evarts as legal representative of the Washington government, has been visiting me, and from a rather confidential conversation with him, I find that you must have been misinformed as to the correspondence or communications that have been taking place between Adams and our Foreign Office. The President, from what I gather from Mr. W., who seems to be in the most confidential relations with him and his Cabinet, is determined whatever happens, short of a direct intervention, not to have a rupture with England or France during the Civil War. And he has not authorized

Adams to give any notice of leaving his post even if the ironclads are permitted, *on the plea of legality,* to leave our ports. Nor will he meddle with Mexican politics, whatever may happen, whilst Jeff Davis is in the field. In all this he shows a strong common sense much to be commended. 1863. ÆT. 59.

"Mr. Whiting tells me that Mr. Adams had no assurance up to the last from our Government that the Rams would not leave, and even when our semi-official papers were announcing that they had been arrested, he gave expression to a fear that he might get up any morning and find the ships had escaped. Now that I see by yesterday's paper that the broad arrow has been put upon the Rams, I suppose the matter is settled."

"*Midhurst, Oct.* 17, 1863. („)—I return Aspinall's and Chase's letters. I was pleased with Chase when I saw him in Ohio, where he was governor of the State in 1859. He is in his physical and mental traits not unlike Sumner—a massy, stately-principled man, but more practical and less of the rhetorician than his Massachusetts colleague. He is altogether a different type to Seward.

"I have a letter from Evarts by the last mail. He seems well pleased at the detention of the Rams. He has a passage in his letter which seems rather to corroborate your information about Lord Russell. He says, 'From information which I have of the severity and uncertainty of the final struggle with your ministry, Earl Russell was discreditably slow and unsteady in coming to the right decision. I am sure that when the communications of proofs as to the destination of these ships of war made to your government are made public, common sense on both sides of the water will be shocked at the stumbling hesitancy of the ministerial council in face of the facts, and at the narrow escape the two nations have had from at least partial hostilities.'"

1863. ÆT. 59.

"*October* 4, 1864. („)—I should say that as a politician Lincoln is very superior to McClellan, who is a professional soldier and nothing more. By the way, Lincoln stumped Illinois for the Senate in opposition to Douglas, the ablest debater in America after Clay. They travelled from county town to county town together, and met the same audience on the same platform in forty or fifty counties, questioning, bantering, and exposing each other's shortcomings. It is the fashion to underrate Lincoln intellectually in part, because he illustrates his arguments with amusing anecdotes. But Franklin was not less given to apologues, and some of them not of the most refined character. It is quite certain that an inferior man could never have maintained such a contest as Lincoln went through with Douglas. Presidents are apt to fulfil the second term better than the first. Chase is the strongest man of the Republican party, and I sincerely hope Lincoln will bring him back to the Treasury.

"I hope you were pleased with the compliment paid us in California.[6] There is a poetical sublimity about the idea of associating our name with a tree 300 feet high and 60 feet girth! Verily it is a monument not built with men's hands. If I were twenty years younger I would hope to look on these forest giants; great trees and rivers have an attraction for me."

Political torpor of the day.

"*April* 5, 1863. (*To Mr. Hargreaves.*)—How do you admire the reception given to the 'Feargus O'Connor of the middle classes' in Scotland?[7] For the Town Councils and their addresses I can find excuses; they are privileged

[6] The names of Cobden and Bright were inscribed respectively on tablets on two of the giant trees of the Yosemite valley.

[7] Lord Palmerston was installed as Lord Rector at Glasgow, March 30, and had a very triumphant reception. See Irving's *Annals of our Time*, p. 644.

flunkies, and nothing else could be expected from them. But there is no doubt that the demonstration was largely shared by the working class, which is certainly one of the most singular and inexplicable of public incidents. It brings to my mind the saying of our librarian, ——, who, when speaking of the old Premier, called him 'the most successful impostor since Mahomet!'

"There is a remarkable fact in the political movement, or rather political torpor of our day, that the non-electors, or working men, have no kind of organization or organ of the Press by which they can make their existence known, either to help their friends or prevent their body being used as was done in Glasgow, to strengthen their enemies—for the latter effect has no doubt been produced by the address from the working class presented to the Premier.

"I observe what you say about Bright's powers of eloquence. That eloquence has been most unsparingly used since the repeal of the Corn Laws—now going on for nearly twenty years—in advocating financial economy and parliamentary reform, and in every possible way for the abasement of privilege and the elevation of the masses. If he could talk till doomsday he would never surpass the strains of eloquence with which he has expounded the right and demolished the wrong cause. Yet see with what absolute lack of success!

"Now if you have ever the chance of bringing your influence to bear on him in this connexion, let it be, I entreat you, to urge him to take any opportunity that the working class may offer him to tell them frankly that nobody can help them until they are determined to help themselves. Let the responsibility be thrown back on them in a way to sting them into an effort, if self-respect fail to excite them. They should be told plainly that old parties have coalesced on the ground that no further parliamentary

1863. ÆT. 59. reform is required—that five millions of adult males in the kingdom are politically ignored, or only remembered to be insulted, and that this state of things will endure so long as the five millions eat, drink, smoke, and sleep contentedly under the proscription, and that no power on earth will ever help them out of their political serfdom until they show that they can discriminate between those who would emancipate them and those who would keep them as they are. Until the non-electoral class can have a *bonâ fide* organization in every large town, composed of their own class, and self-sustained, it is a pure waste of life and strength for a man of Bright's genius to attempt to advance their cause in that packed assembly, the House of Commons."

On Privateering.

"*Oct.* 6, 1863. (*To Mr. Bigelow.*)—In 1854, on the breaking out of the Crimean war, a communication was sent by England and France to the American Government, expressing a confident hope that it would, 'in the spirit of just reciprocity, give orders that no privateer under Russian colours shall be equipped, or *victualled*, or admitted with its prizes, in the ports of the United States,' &c. It has occurred to me to call your attention to this, although I dare say it has not escaped Mr. Dayton's recollection. But I should be curious to know what answer the French Government would now make if its own former language was quoted against the course now being taken at Brest in repairing, and I suppose 'victualling,' the 'Florida.' If the answer be that this vessel is not a 'privateer' but a regularly commissioned ship-of-war, then I think the opportunity should not be lost to put on record a rejoinder to this argument, showing the futility of the Declaration of Paris against privateering; for if a vessel sailing under one form of authority issued by Jefferson Davis, and called a 'commission,' can

do all the mischief to your merchant-vessels which another could do carrying another piece of paper called a 'letter of marque,' it is obvious that the renunciation of privateering by the Paris Congress is a mere empty phrase, and all the boasted gain to humanity is nothing but a delusion if not a hollow subterfuge. I think it might be well if Mr. Dayton were to take this opportunity of justifying the policy of the United States in refusing to be a party to the Declaration of Paris, unless private property at sea was exempt from capture by armed ships of *all kinds*. The argument would be valuable for reproduction at a future time, when the question of belligerent rights comes up again for discussion."

CHAPTER XXXV.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH MR. DELANE.

It was inevitable that a public man, working for a transformation of political opinion, should incur the hostility of the great newspaper of the day, for the simple reason that it has always been the avowed principle of the conductors of that newspaper to keep very close to the political opinion of the country in its unregenerate state. This principle it is not our business here to discuss, but we can easily perceive how it would come to make the newspaper sincerely inimical to the Manchester school. We need not resort to private grudges to explain what is perfectly intelligible without them.

"I remember," said Cobden, in his speech on behalf of Mr. Bright at Manchester in 1857, "the first time I spoke in public after returning home from the Continent in 1847. It was at a dinner-party in Manchester at which I took the chair; and I took the opportunity of launching this question of the press, and saying that the newspaper press of England was not free, and that this was a thing which the reformers of the country ought to set about—to emancipate it. Well, I got a most vicious article next day from the *Times* newspaper for that, and the *Times* has followed us both with a very ample store of venom ever since."[1] "Any man," he said on the same occasion, "who has lived in

[1] *Speeches*, ii. 77.

public life, as I have, must know that it is quite useless to contradict any falsehood or calumny, because it comes up again next day just as rife as ever. There is the *Times* newspaper always ready to repeat it, and the grosser the better." "My plan," he wrote to a friend in 1861, "has always been to meet that journal with a bold front, and neither to give nor to take quarter. I may add that if ever I have succeeded in any public proceedings, it has always been in spite of the opposition of that print. It was so with the League; with the abolition of the Taxes on Knowledge; and with the French Treaty. You may take my word for it, you never can be in the path for success, in any great measure of policy, unless you are in opposition to that journal."[1]

It was very easy to see the reason why all this should be as it was. In 1850 Cobden told Mr. John Cassell that he believed the newspaper stamp to be the greatest grievance that the democracy had in the whole list of fiscal exactions. "So long as the penny lasts, there can be no daily press for the middle or working class. Who below the rank of a merchant or wholesale dealer can afford to take in a daily paper at fivepence? Clearly it is beyond the reach of the mechanic and the shopkeeper. The result is that the daily press is written for its customers—the aristocracy, the millionaires, and the clubs and news-rooms. The great public cannot have its organs of the daily press, because it cannot afford to pay for them. The dissenters have no daily organ for the same reason. The governing class in this country will resist the removal of the penny stamp, not on account of the loss of revenue (*that* is no obstacle with a surplus of two or three millions), but because they know that the stamp makes the daily press the instrument and servant of the oligarchy."

[1] *To Mr. W. S. Lindsay.* Feb. 25, 1861.

1863. Æt. 59. His correspondence shows with how sharp an eye Cobden watched his masked foe. He jealously noted any post that was conferred on a writer in the *Times*; in this respect, I am bound to confess, being rather apt to make mountains out of extremely small molehills.[3] He told his friends in scornful tones of the social deference that was paid in private by great people to the famous editor, and was scandalized, here also rather unreasonably, to find him dining at tables where every guest but himself was an ambassador, a cabinet minister, or a bishop. An eminent visitor from the United States, who had access to London society, was for a long time perplexed by the social attentions that were bestowed on this mysterious being, and in conversation with Cobden contrasted the position of the press and its conductors in England with that of similar personages in his own country. "In America," said Cobden, referring to this in a letter to Mr. Hargreaves, "the editor or proprietor puts his name on the front of his paper, fights the battles of his party openly, shares in the honours of its victories, and is to be found among the senators, the governors of states, etc. But with us the conductor of the *Times* preserves a strict incognito to his readers, on the plea that anonymous writing is necessary for preserving his independence, whilst he inconsistently drops the mask in the presence of those who dispense social distinctions and dispose of government patronage—the very persons towards whom in the interests of the public he ought to preserve his independence."[4]

[3] It is worth remembering, however, that in the famous Slough speech of 1858, Mr. Disraeli accused his Whig adversaries of "corrupting the once pure and independent press of England." "Innocent people in the country," he said, "who look to the leading articles in the newspapers for advice and direction—who look to what are called leading organs to be the guardians of their privileges and the directors of their political consciences—are not the least aware, because this sort of knowledge travels slowly, that leading organs now are placehunters of the court, and that the once stern guardians of popular rights simper in the enervating atmosphere of gilded saloons."

[4] *To W. Hargreaves.* Feb. 16, 1861.

In November, 1863, it happened that in his annual address to his constituents, Cobden made a passing reference to the land question, and Mr. Bright followed with more on the same subject. The *Times* promptly accused the two Gracchi of Rochdale of exciting discontent among the poor, and proposing a spoliation of the owners of land. The rest of the story is worth telling, if for no other reason, because it illustrates the kind of opinion which public writers could at that time pretend seriously to hold about these two statesmen. 1863. ÆT. 59.

By accident Cobden saw the misrepresentation of which his enemy had been guilty, and he at once wrote the following letter to the editor of the *Times*:—

SIR,—The following is extracted from your yesterday's leading article:—

"Then, though a small state may have something to lose by change, it has usually more to gain; and so it comes to pass that it looks upon any attempt to reconstruct the map, or reform the institutions of Europe, with something of that satisfaction with which the poor might regard *Mr. Bright's proposition for a division among them of the lands of the rich*, or the Roman plebeians might hang on the lips of Gracchus when he rose to expound to them his last plan for a new colony, with large grants of land to every citizen who should join it."

Without communicating with Mr. Bright, I trouble you with a few words on this gross literary outrage, which concerns not him alone, but every public man. To utter a syllable to prove that the above assertion, that Mr. Bright advocated a division of the lands of the rich among the poor, is a groundless and gratuitous falsehood, would be to offer an insult to one who has done more than probably any other public man, to popularize those economical truths on which the rights of property are based. To say that it is a foul libel for which the publisher is amenable to law were beside the question, because the object of the calumny would scorn any other court of appeal than that of public opinion. But a wider question is forced on our attention by this specimen of your too habitual mode of dealing, not merely with individuals, but with the interests of society. A tone of pre-eminent unscrupulousness in the discussion of political questions, a contempt for the rights and feelings of others, and a shameless disregard of the claims of consistency and sincerity on the part of its writers, have long been recognized as the distinguishing characteristics of the *Times*, and placed it in marked contrast with the rest of the periodical press, including the penny journals of the metropolis

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and the provinces. Its writers are, I believe, betrayed into this tone mainly by their reliance on the shield of an impenetrable secrecy. No gentleman would dream of saying, under the responsibility of his signature, what your writer said of Mr. Bright yesterday. I will not stop to remark on the deterioration of character which follows when a man of education and rare ability thus lowers himself—ay, even in his own eyes—to a condition of moral cowardice; for will he deny that if he were to meet Mr. Bright in the club, or the House of Commons, with the knowledge that his secret was divulged, he would cower with conscious inferiority before the man he had stabbed in the dark? This, however, is his own affair. But there is another aspect of the subject in which the public is directly interested.

In the present management of the *Times* there is an essential departure from the plan on which it was conducted twenty or thirty years ago, which distinguishes it from all other journals. They who associate in the higher political circles of the metropolis know that the chief editor and the manager of the *Times*, while still maintaining a strict *incognito* towards the public, drops the mask with very sufficient reasons in the presence of those powerful classes who are at once the dispensers of social distinction, and (on which I might have something to say) of the patronage of the Government. We all know the man whose fortune is derived from the *Times*; we know its manager; its only avowed and responsible editor—he of the semi-official correspondence with Sir Charles Napier in the Baltic—through whose hands, though he never pen a line himself, every slander in its leaders must pass—is as well known to us as the chief official at the Home Office. Now the question is forced on us, whether we who are behind the scenes are not bound, in the interests of the uninitiated public, and as the only certain mode of abating such outrages as this, to lift the veil and dispel the illusion by which the *Times* is enabled to pursue this game of secrecy to the public, and servility to the Government—a game (I purposely use the word) which secures for its connexions the corrupt advantages, while denying to the public its own boasted benefits of the anonymous system.

It will be well for public men to decide, each in his own case (for myself I have no doubt on the subject), whether, in response to such attacks as these, they will continue to treat the *Times* as an impersonal myth; or whether on the contrary, they will in future summon the responsible editor, manager, or proprietor to the bar of public opinion, and hold him up by name to the obloquy which awaits the traducer and the calumniator in every other walk of social and political life.

I am, &c.,

RICHARD COBDEN.

MIDHURST, *December* 4, 1863.

This letter was not inserted in the *Times*, and the Editor wrote to Cobden a reply, of which the following is the substance:— 1863. ÆT. 59.

The *Times* Office, *Dec.* 7, 1863.

The Editor of the *Times* presents his compliments to Mr. Cobden, and encloses a proof of his letter, which, though it arrived by Saturday's post, only reached the Editor's hands last evening. He could not then give it immediate consideration, but, in deference to Mr. Cobden's name, he announced that it should be published to-morrow.

On reading it, however, this morning, he thinks—and he trusts Mr. Cobden will, on re-perusal, agree with him—that Mr. Cobden has no right to expect him, upon a pretext entirely irrelevant, to publish a series of most offensive and unfounded imputations upon himself and his friends.

. . . . The facts, however, are shortly these:—Messrs. Cobden and Bright make two speeches at Rochdale, which are reported in the *Times* at unusual length, and with extraordinary promptitude. These speeches are discussed elaborately in two leading articles on successive days, and in each of them certain passages are interpreted as recommending a re-partition of the land among the poor. Messrs. Cobden and Bright are expressly challenged to disavow this interpretation if it misrepresents their meaning; but they make no reply, and apparently accept it as conveying their true intention.

The speeches, as reported, also remain before the public for upwards of a week, and the interpretation put upon them by the *Times* provokes no adverse remark. At last an article appears upon a totally different subject, in which an allusion is made in a single phrase to Mr. Bright's supposed opinions, and Mr. Cobden pounces upon this phrase, not that he may discuss the true interpretation of Mr. Bright's expressions, but that he may make a vague and most offensive attack upon the *Times* and its conductors.

The Editor declines to permit the *Times* to be made the means of disseminating imputations which he knows to be unfounded, and which are entirely irrelevant to the question at issue.

The sensation was tremendous in Fleet Street and Pall Mall, when Cobden published his rejoinder, not to the impersonal Editor, but to Mr. Delane in his own proper name.

TO JOHN T. DELANE, ESQ.

SIR,—You and I have been long personally acquainted; your handwriting is known to me, and I know you to be the chief Editor of the

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Times. Under such circumstances I cannot allow you to suppress your individuality, and shield yourself under the third person of the editorial nominative, in a correspondence affecting your personal responsibility for a scandalous aspersion on myself (as I now learn for the first time from you) as well as on Mr. Bright.

Your refusal to publish my former letter is a matter so entirely within your own province, that I have nothing to say upon it, except to congratulate myself on the recent revolution in the newspaper world, which renders your decision comparatively harmless. A few years ago the *Times* possessed almost a monopoly of publicity. Four-fifths of the daily newspaper circulation issued from its press. *Now* it constitutes, probably, one-tenth of our diurnal journalism, and my letter will be only the more generally read from having been excluded from your columns.

But your letter proceeds to offer some most singular arguments in justification of your attack on Mr. Bright. You state that your journal had previously contained two leading articles, casting the same imputation both on him and myself, that you had challenged us to disavow your interpretation of our speeches, and as we had failed to do so, you accepted our silence as an acknowledgment of the truth of your interpretation,—in other words, as proof of our guilt! Here we have, in a compendious form, an exhibition of those qualities which characterize the editorial management of the *Times*,—of that arrogant self-complacency, logical incoherence, and moral bewilderment, which a too long career of impunity and irresponsibility could alone engender.

Now that which lies at the basis of this reasoning, if such it may be termed, is an inordinate display of what I must call *Times* egotism. Notwithstanding that your journal has now but a fractional part of the daily newspaper circulation, you complacently assume that all the world are your constant readers. The *Times* never enters my house, except by rare accident. This I know to be also the case with Mr. Bright, who will, in all probability, never have seen your attack until he reads it in my letter. It is only during the Session, at the Club, that I am in the habit of seeing your paper. The chance visit of a friend last Friday placed in my hand the *Times* of the previous day, when that scandalous paragraph caught my eye which formed the text of my letter to you. I was entirely ignorant of the two former attacks, which, by a droll process of reasoning, you now invite me to accept as a justification of the third. Now, let me ask you to descend for a minute from your editorial chair, while I illustrate this logic by a hypothetical case put to Mr. Delane, the barrister. Suppose that the constituents of Mr. Bright were to indict your publisher for defaming their member, and that it was proposed in a consultation of lawyers, at which you were present, to set up as a plea of justification at the trial that the same libel had been twice previously

published against both Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden,—would it fail to occur to you that, in the eyes of an honest judge and jury, this defence would be considered an aggravation of the offence? 1863. ÆT. 59.

But we will assume, for the sake of argument, that Mr. Bright and I are regular subscribers to, and diligent readers of, your newspaper. Is it seriously contended that as often as you choose to pervert the sense of our speeches, and charge us with schemes of public robbery, the *onus* lies with us to disprove the imputation, and that neglecting to do so, we have no right to complain if we are thenceforth treated as felons? Would it not occur to any one but an editor of the *Times* that, before we violate the ninth commandment, the obligation lies with us to know that we are not bringing a false accusation against our neighbour?

Now, a word upon the subject which has given rise to this correspondence. Nobody knows better than yourself, except the writer who actually penned the scandalous passage in question, that this charge of wishing to divide the land of the rich among the poor, when levelled at Mr. Bright, is nothing but the resort to a stale rhetorical trick (though the character of the libel is not on that account altered) to draw away public attention from the real issue, and thus escape from the discussion of a serious, but, for the moment, an inconvenient public topic. In order to trail a red herring across the true scent the cry of spoliation was raised. You and your writers cannot be ignorant that the laws and political institutions of this country tend to promote the agglomeration of agricultural land in a constantly lessening number of hands:—you and I know, by a joint experience, which neither of us is likely to have forgotten, how great are the obstacles which the law interposes to the free transfer of landed property in this country. Now, the policy which sustains this state of things is a public question, which is not only fairly open to discussion, but invites the earnest attention and study of public men. In this, as in every other human concern, we must bring the matter to the test of experience, and in no way can this be more effectually done than by a comparison between the condition of the great majority of the agricultural population in this and other countries. The subject of our land laws has engaged the attention of eminent statesmen, and of our highest legal authorities; but I will venture to add—and it is all I shall condescend to say in refutation of your aspersions—that if there are two persons, who beyond all others, have given pledges throughout an ardent discussion of kindred topics during a quarter of a century, that in debating the question of the tenure and transfer of land they would observe the restraints of law, justice, and political economy, they are the men whom your journal has dared to charge with the advocacy of a scheme for robbing the landowners of their property for the benefit of the poor.

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Judging from past experience, this intrusion of a gross personality will tend only to attract public notice to a matter which it was meant to put out of sight. It has been the fate of the *Times* to help forward every cause it has opposed. By its truculent, I had almost said ruffianly, attacks on every movement while in the weakness of infancy, it has roused to increased efforts the energies of those it has assailed; while, at the same time, it has awakened the attention of a languid public, and attracted the sympathy of fair and manly minds. It is thus that such public measures as the abolition of the Corn Laws, the repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge, and the negotiation of the Treaty of Commerce with France, triumphed in spite of its virulent, pertinacious, and unscrupulous opposition; until, at last, I am tending to the conviction that there are three conditions only, requisite for the success of any great project of reform,—namely, a good cause, persevering advocates, and the hostility of the *Times*.

I shall forward this correspondence for publication in the *Rochdale Observer*, that it may at least be perused by the community which has the greatest interest in a controversy which concerns the reputation of Mr. Bright and myself.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

R. COBDEN.

MIDHURST, *Dec.* 9, 1863.

To this Mr. Delane replied (Dec. 11) that it was quite true that they had long been personally acquainted; that there was no need to identify his handwriting; and that he had no desire to deny his personal responsibility for what Cobden was pleased to call his "scandalous aspersions." Proceeding to vindicate himself, Mr. Delane asked whether it was egotistic or unreasonable to suppose that one who had pounced so promptly upon a single phrase in an article of much inferior interest to himself, should have read the articles which discussed his own speech? Could he be expected to know that a gentleman who once preferred a single copy of the *Times* "to all the books of Thucydides" did not admit the *Times* to his house?[1] The pith of the vindication was in the following paragraph:—

[1] This refers to an expression of Cobden's which was a standing joke against him in those days. At a meeting of the Manchester Athenæum (Dec. 27, 1850), Cobden used the following language:—"I take it that, as

You attribute to the *Times* a deliberate misrepresentation of your meaning and that of Mr. Bright, as to the means of amending the unequal distribution of land between the rich and the poor. I repeat that certain passages in your speeches will, in my opinion, bear no other interpretation than that ascribed to them. If you merely intended to recommend measures for facilitating the conveyance of land, as your reference to our transaction at Ascot would suggest, your language was the most strangely exaggerated that was ever used to further a humble instalment of law reform. If you had read the *Times*, instead of condemning it unread, you would have known that it has always advocated the simplification of means for the transfer of land, and that its advocacy has not been altogether unsuccessful. But just as no simplification of conveyances will compel the rich to sell land or enable the poor to buy it, so no legislative measure will render the purchase of land a profitable investment for the poor.

The possession, the transfer, and the tenure of land are, however, public questions, which are best discussed, not between Mr. Cobden and Mr. Delane, but as it has always been the practice of the English press to discuss them—anonymously. That practice was not invented by me; it will not be destroyed by yourself. It has approved itself to the judgment of all, whether statesmen or publicists, who have appreciated the freedom and independence of the press; and I believe it to be essential to the interests not only of the press, but of the public.

Cobden, however, insisted on carrying on the controversy with Mr. Delane:—

a rule, grown-up men, in these busy times, read very little else but newspapers. I think the reading of volumes is almost the exception; and the man who habitually has between his fingers 400 or 500 newspapers in the course of the year—that is, daily and weekly newspapers—and is engaged pretty actively in business, or in political or public life—depend upon it, whatever he may say, or like to have it thought to the contrary, he reads very little else, as a rule, but the current periodical literature; and I doubt if a man with limited time could read anything else that would be much more useful to him. I believe it has been said that one copy of the *Times* contains more useful information than the whole of the historical books of Thucydides—(laughter);—and I am very much inclined to think that to an Englishman or an American of the present day that is strictly true." The opinion may be sound or not, but the expression was a slip, because it showed that the speaker knew little about the author on whose comparative value he was hinting a judgment. Too much was made of the slip by journalists and collegians who knew little more about Thucydides than did Cobden himself, but who now wrote as if that rather troublesome author were the favourite companion of their leisure hours.

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To John T. Delane, Esq.

Sir,—I have received the letter dated from your private residence, and bearing your own signature, in which you take on yourself personally the responsibility of the interpretation put by the *Times* on the speeches of Mr. Bright and myself at Rochdale—namely, that we proposed "a division among the poor of the lands of the rich." Your letter to me says:—

"You attribute to the *Times* a deliberate misrepresentation of your meaning, and that of Mr. Bright, as to the means of amending the unequal distribution of the land between the rich and the poor. I repeat that certain passages in your speeches will, in my opinion, bear no other interpretation than that ascribed to them."

This is a grave accusation. I am told that, if proved, it would bring Mr. Bright and myself within the provisions of the Act 57th Geo. III. cap. 19, and render us liable to the penal consequences of transportation for seven years.

I will not believe that you can be so wanting in the respect due to others, as well as yourself, as to have addressed this accusation to me, unless with the belief that you have evidence to substantiate it.

I call on you to give me those "certain passages" to which you refer, and which are really now the only question at issue between you and me. That there may be no excuse or ground for delay, I accept the report which appeared in your paper as an accurate version of my speech; and to aid you in your task I have cut from the *Times* the entire passage which contains all that I said in reference to the condition of the people generally, or to the agricultural population, and the land question in particular. But let it be distinctly understood that I do not confine you to this extract, but that I give you the entire range of my speech.

Before giving the passage I will say a few words, which, although I do not in the slightest degree claim for them the character of evidence, may have interest in some quarters.

It is known that I am not in the habit of writing a word beforehand of what I speak in public. Like other speakers, practice has given me as perfect self-possession in the presence of an audience as if I were writing in my closet. Now, my ever-constant and overruling thought while addressing a public meeting, the one necessity which long experience of the arts of controversialists has impressed on my mind, is to avoid the possibility of being misrepresented, and prevent my opponents from raising a false issue—a trick of logic as old as the time of Aristotle. If I have, as some favourable critics are pleased to think, sometimes spoken with clearness, it is more owing to this ever-present fear of misrepresentation than any other cause:—it is thus that the most noxious things in life may have

their uses. When in my speech at Rochdale I came to touch upon the subject of the land, the thought instantly flashed upon me—and none but the public speaker knows with what velocity thoughts move when in the presence of 4000 listeners—that I was dealing with a question about which there is a superstition in England, unknown elsewhere, and that the enemy would raise the cry of agrarianism against me, and hence my denunciation of agrarian outrage, which will be found in the following extract. Had I been inspired with the faculty of second-sight, and seen the Editor of the *Times* sitting bodily penning his criticism on my speech, I could not have more completely refuted and confounded in anticipation the charge now brought against me. 1863. ÆT. 59.

The following is the passage referred to :—

"It has been a fashion of late to talk of an extension of the franchise as something not to be tolerated, because it is assumed that the mass of the community are not fitted to take a part in government, and people point to America and France, and other countries, and draw comparisons between this country and other countries. Now, I hope I shall not be considered revolutionary, because at my age I don't want any revolutions. They won't serve me, I am sure, or anybody that belongs to me. England may compare very favourably with most other countries if you draw the line in society tolerably high; and if you compare the condition of the rich and the upper classes of England, or a considerable portion of the middle classes, with the same classes abroad. I don't think a rich man, barring the climate, which is not very good, could be very much happier anywhere else than in England; but when my opponents treat this question of the franchise as one that threatens to bring the masses of the people down from their present state to the level of other nations, I say that I have travelled in most civilized countries, and that the masses of my fellow-countrymen do not compare so favourably with the masses of other countries as I could wish. I find in other countries a greater proportion of people owning property than there are in England. I don't know a protestant community in the world where the masses of the people are so illiterate as in England. These are not bad tests of the condition of a people. It is no use your talking of your army and navy, your exports and your imports—it is no use telling me you have a small portion of your people exceedingly well off. I want to bring the test to a comparison of the majority of the people with the majority of the people in other countries. Now, I say with regard to some things in foreign countries we don't compare favourably. The condition of the English peasantry has no parallel on the face of the earth. (Hear.) You have no other peasantry but that of England which is entirely divorced from the land. There is no other country in the world where you will not find men holding the plough and turning up the furrow upon their own freehold. *I don't want any agrarian outrages by which we should change all this*, but this I find, and it is quite consistent with human nature, that wherever I go the condition of the people is generally pretty good, in comparison with the power they have to take care of themselves; and if you have a class entirely destitute of

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political power, while in another country they possess it, they will be treated there with more consideration, they will have greater advantages, they will be better educated, and have a better chance of possessing property than in a country where they are deprived of political power. (Hear.)

You will observe in the above passage from my speech, taken from your own report, that I use the words, "I don't want any agrarian outrages by which we should change all this;" and now we must appeal to the authority of the lexicographer. If you turn to *Webster's* (quarto) *Dictionary* you will find the word "agrarian" interpreted, on the authority of Burke, as follows:—

"Relating to lands. Denoting or pertaining to an equal division of lands; as, the agrarian laws of Rome, which distributed the conquered and other public lands equally among all the citizens, limiting the quantity which each might enjoy." Again, in the same dictionary the word "agrarianism" is given as an equal division of lands or property, or the principles of those who favour such a division."

Thus, in repudiating the agrarian system, I repudiated, in pure and unquestionable English, according to Burke, the principles of those who favour an equal division of land; I repudiated the agrarian laws of Rome; and yet, in spite of this, you charge me and Mr. Bright with "proposing a division among the poor of the lands of the rich," and you associate us with Gracchus in schemes of socialistic spoliation.

Mr. Delane in reply (Dec. 16) insisted that the passage to which Cobden had referred him, did in his opinion convey a proposition for the division among the poor of the lands of the rich. "You seem to assume," he said, "that I charged you with proposing that this division should be accomplished by violence. But your own words were there to prove to me that such was not your meaning, and to confute me instantly if I had attempted to attach that meaning to it." This, as we shall see in a moment, ruined Mr. Delane's case, for the *Times* had distinctly and in terms described the proposed change as the work of violence. Meanwhile, he went on to say that it could be effected by compulsory partition after death as in France:—

A similar measure proposed by yourself, or by Mr. Bright, and carried in a parliament elected principally by the peasantry whom you

desire to enfranchise, because they would then "have a better chance of having property," would in two or three generations not only check the accumulation of land in few hands, but would break up all existing estates, great or small, and thus largely increase the number of proprietors. In another generation, probably, the peasant himself would "turn up the furrow on his own freehold," and be no longer "divorced from the land."

You suggest so obviously that it is by legislative measures—rendered possible by giving political power to the peasantry—you propose to "amend the unequal distribution of the land between the "rich and the poor," that no one would think of charging you with endeavouring to effect this great change by violence.

It was clear that Mr. Delane had now surrendered himself into the hands of his adversary. Cobden did not allow him to escape. "For the first time," he replied (Dec. 18), "you now disavow having imputed to Mr. Bright and myself the design of promoting by violent, illegal, or immoral means a redistribution of the land of this country." Grammar, logic, and common sense, he said, all revolted against the Editor's attempt to show the connexion between his former language and his new accusation.

You now profess only to impute to us the design of favouring the equal division of landed property among all the children at the death of a proprietor. But this will not correspond with your reiterated charge that we contemplated a division "among the poor of the land of the rich." What you now affect to consider to be our object is the division of the land of the rich equally among the children of the rich. I must bring the question to the test of your own language.

In your leading article of December 3, you alleged that the small states of the continent regarded a congress with the "satisfaction with which the poor might regard Mr. Bright's proposition for dividing among them the lands of the rich." I now infer, from your new interpretation, that I am asked to construe this as meaning only the satisfaction with which the children of rich landowners would regard a proposition for dividing among them the lands of their fathers.

Again, in your letter to me of December 7 you stated "These speeches are discussed elaborately in two leading articles on successive days, and in each of them certain passages are interpreted as recommending a *repartition of the land among the poor.*" Now, the word partition

1863. ÆT. 59. or repartition means simply a division, and not a bequest or inheritance, and yet, with our dictionaries at hand, you now ask me to interpret the "repartition of the land among the poor," as only meaning that Mr. Bright and I wished to compel rich landowners at their death to leave their estates equally among all their children. And in your letter to me of December 11 you "repeat" the assertion that "certain passages" of our speeches "bear no other interpretation than that ascribed to them." Now up to that date you had put no other interpretation on those speeches than that they advocated the "division of the land of the rich among the poor." The poor we are now told to interpret to mean only the children of rich landowners!

Then, I suppose, we are expected to forget that you coupled us with Gracchus, and the agrarian system of Rome.

No; in the teeth of all these proofs in plain, unmistakable English to the contrary, I should be sacrificing truth to courtesy were I to affect to concur in this new version of your language, which does not admit of two meanings.

This was sufficiently pungent; but it was not the most decisive blow. On the evening of the day on which he wrote the above letter, Cobden found in the *Daily News* what it is odd that he should not have sought earlier, namely, a passage from one of the previous articles in the *Times* to which Mr. Delane had referred. "This language," the *Times* had said (Nov. 26), "so often repeated, and so calculated to excite discontent among the poor and half-informed, *has really only one intelligible meaning*. 'Reduce the electoral franchise; for when you have done so you will obtain an assembly which will *seize* on the estates of the proprietors of land, and *divide them gratuitously among the poor*.' . . . It may be right to reduce the franchise, *but certainly not as a step to spoliation*."

Now, said Cobden, "you will at once perceive that unless this language be unreservedly recalled, it makes the statement in your last letter simply a mockery and an untruth." Mr. Delane, declaring that the passage taken without its context does not convey the same meaning as when taken with it, and enclosing a copy of the article in full, then

begged to retire from the personal part of the controversy. 1863. Æt. 59.

There can now be very little difference of opinion among candid men as to the merits of the controversy. It is hardly possible to deny two propositions; first, that the interpretation by the *Times* of what had been said at Rochdale was plainly unjust, heedless, and calumnious; second, that Mr. Delane's attempt to explain away the imputation of violence and spoliation was wholly unsuccessful. No editor ever stumbled into a more palpable scrape, nor chose a less fortunate way out of it. The simple and manly course which the Editor of the *Times* ought to have taken was to say something of this kind;—"My article was written in good faith. It is possible, however, that the writer may have been led by certain conscious or unconscious prepossessions against the speakers to read something in Mr. Bright's speech and in yours which was not literally there. I now see, looking at the speeches more carefully, that your words could not bear the construction that was put upon them, and that your complaint is justified. I will, as Editor, publicly retract an imputation which I now perceive to have been erroneous."

As this apology was not forthcoming, Cobden was entirely justified in publicly seizing Mr. Delane by name, and fixing upon him personally the misdemeanour for which he contumaciously made himself answerable. Anonymous journalism may be tolerated and defended on account of certain incidental conveniences—Cobden himself wrote plenty of anonymous articles—but the system cannot be invoked to protect the writer or the conductor of a public print from liability to be called publicly to account in case of persistent and proved misrepresentation. On the other hand, it can hardly be denied that Cobden put himself in the wrong by accusing the conductors of the *Times* of cor-

1863. ÆT. 59. ruption. When he talked of the "corrupt advantages" of servility to the Government, he made an imputation which he could not prove (as he found out when he tried to get up a case for Parliament), and which was in fact not justified. The conductors of the *Times* did not praise the friends and abuse the enemies of the Government, in order to have one of their contributors sent to the Bahamas, or another made a magistrate at Bow Street. The *Times* was Palmerstonian because the country was Palmerstonian, just as by-and-by it became Derbyite because the country seemed Derbyite. It condemned the talk of Cobden and Mr. Bright about the land, because the capitalists and the country gentlemen and the great nobles were frightened out of their senses by such talk. The conductor of a newspaper is entirely at liberty to choose what constituency he will attract. It pleased the *Times* at that day to domesticate itself, it was said, among the aristocracy. This may have been a very narrow and ignoble policy, but Mr. Delane had as much right to prefer to spend his evenings among dukes and bishops as Cobden had to spend his among manufacturers and merchants. One thing he had not a right to do, and that was to fasten upon public men propositions which it was his business to know that they had never made.

That the *Times* was wrong upon some of the greatest questions of Cobden's time is quite clear. How wrong it was upon the Russian War, the China War, the American Civil War, everybody knows. But let us be just. If the *Times* was wrong, so was the country. The newspaper only said what the directing classes of the country said. Cobden's own letters to his friends show as much as this. The *Times* was, in fact, the natural exponent of all those old ideas of national policy which Cobden was bent on overthrowing. Just like the Athenian Sophist, the newspaper taught the conventional prejudices of those who paid for it. It is as if, says

Socrates of the Sophist and his public, a man had observed the appetites of a great and powerful beast, how to approach it, why it is furious or calm, what tones soothe and what tones irritate it. Like the Sophist, the newspaper reflects the morality, the intelligence, the tone of sentiment, of its public. If the latter is vicious, so is the former. 1863. Æt. 59.

As it happened, a great organ in the penny press treated Cobden, as he thought, even worse than if its price had been threepence. The *Daily Telegraph* declined to print Cobden's letter to Mr. Delane, from a rather unctuously expressed tenderness for Cobden's reputation; but though it suppressed his letter, it published some very unfriendly comments on it. Cobden protested against this with much vivacity. The merciful haze of time has effaced the interest of much of his letter, but some portion of it is relevant to still unsettled questions in the constitution of the literary priesthood.

The question concerns the Government on one side, and the leading London journal on the other. Does not that affect the public? Is the disposal of Government patronage—the appointment to posts which the public pay—a private or personal question? Recollect, I repeat, that the entire controversy between us is—whether or not the subject should be shrouded in secrecy. It is not the question of anonymous writing that is in debate. *That* is only the red herring drawn across the true scent. We all write anonymously, more or less. The only objection is to the masked literary assassin. Nor is it a question whether writers for the press have a right to their share of public appointments; nobody denies it. I do not even say that the stream of patronage ought not to flow to the *Times* office; I only contend that it should not run underground.

Far from thinking that the class of whom we are speaking should be excluded from the public service, I form a very high estimate of the fitness for legislative and administrative function, of those who write for the political instruction of the people. And it is on this account that, while I deny to no one the right of an honest *incognito*, I regret that the prevalent, and perhaps unavoidable habit of anonymous writing in the metropolis, should entomb, for all practical political purposes, so much of our best intellect, and rob society of the full development of

1863. that individuality, which, more than all besides, is essential to the progress
ÆT. 59. and elevation of our species. In the provinces, the anonymous system has, practically, up to a very recent period, never been in operation; because, there, every man's occupation was more or less known to his neighbours. And, if space permitted, I could trace the salutary effect of this on the political progress of the last generation; for it would be easy to adduce the names of half a score of men, the conductors of journals in Leeds, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Manchester, Norwich, &c., &c., to whose able, honest, and energetic efforts, as leaders of public opinion in their several localities, more than probably any other traceable cause, the nation is indebted for its successful resistance to that reactionary spirit, which, from the end of the last century, down to 1820, ran its course of tyrannical repression, and filled all but the stoutest hearts with despair. These men have all passed away, but they should not be forgotten. And if, when my friend Dr. Smiles, himself a distinguished member of the fraternity, shall have completed his biographies of our great discoverers, and improvers in physical science, he should give us a volume of the lives of those pioneers of political progress, it will be seen that their triumphs are traceable to something more than an investment of capital in presses and type, with an impersonal editorial staff,—that they were in each case due to the open and avowed writing, and the personal example of the individual man, who was living in clear daylight, under the full gaze of his neighbours, whom he was not only stimulating, but leading in the path of duty, and by whom he was in turn cheered and sustained. I might also, if space allowed, refer to the advantages which open and avowed journalism might afford to the electoral body, in the choice of representatives to Parliament. Those members of the House of Commons connected with the public press, who have been elected during my experience, and who, with the exception of the first-named, were connected with provincial journals,—Messrs. Miall, Baines, Macguire, Fagan, Lucas, and others,—whatever may be the differences of opinion as to their views, will be acknowledged by all who have sat with them, as having been, in every case, among the foremost of their party, for political intelligence and honour.

I have said enough to show that I take a more exalted view than most men, of the mission of those who instruct the public through the newspaper press, and that, while asserting their title to the most honourable posts, I am assailing only a system by which they are huddled clandestinely into inferior employments, as the result of a secret and illicit intercourse with the Government of the day. And I revert to the question—has not the country a right to be informed, on my responsibility, that this illicit intercourse has been carried on between the *Times* and the Government; and is the *Daily Telegraph* justified in intercepting

from the public, so far as lies in its power, all knowledge of the fact, on the plea that it is a personal matter?

Here we may leave the subject, merely remarking that to the present writer it seems that the word "illicit" in the letter is entirely misplaced and unintelligible. There was only one way of effectually checking the excessive authority of a journal which had abused it; this was to encourage the establishment of competitors. Cobden did as much towards this desirable end as any one, by his share in the reduction of the paper duty, which was what made the cheap press possible. The multiplication of newspapers and periodicals has had the further effect of clearing away the old charlatanry and the mystery of authorship and editorship. The names of all important journalists are now coming to be practically as well known as the names of important members of Parliament, and this change has naturally been followed by that more careful sense of responsibility which Cobden was quite right in insisting upon.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE DANISH WAR—LAST SPEECHES IN PARLIAMENT—CORRESPONDENCE.

1864. Æt. 60.

It was truly said by a Member of the House of Commons at the time, that if the Session of 1864 were remembered at all twenty years afterwards, it would only be remembered for the answer which it gave to the question, Shall or shall not England take part in the struggle between Germany and Denmark? This entitles it to a notable place in any account of Cobden. The answer that was then given was as remarkable a triumph for Cobden's principles, as the result of the Don Pacifico debate had been a victory for Lord Palmerston fourteen years before. The great wave of Nationality which was the moving force in Europe for so many years after the storm of 1848, now swept into Schleswig-Holstein, and brought Danes and Germans into violent collision. We may here content ourselves with Cobden's own account of what he justly called that most complicated of all questions. "In 1852," he said, "by the mischievous activity of our Foreign Office, seven diplomatists were brought round a green table in London to settle the destinies of a million of people in the two provinces of Schleswig and Holstein, without the slightest reference to the wants and wishes or the tendencies or the interests of that people. The preamble of the treaty which was there and then agreed to stated that what those seven diplomatists were going to

do was to maintain the integrity of the Danish monarchy, and to sustain the balance of power in Europe. Kings, Emperors, Princes were represented at that meeting, but the people had not the slightest voice or right in the matter. They settled the treaty, the object of which was to draw closer the bonds between those two provinces and Denmark. The tendency of the great majority of the people of those provinces—about a million of them altogether—was altogether in the direction of Germany. From that time to this year the treaty was followed by constant agitation and discord; two wars have sprung out of it, and it has ended in the treaty being torn to pieces by two of the Governments who were prominent parties to the treaty."[1]

The question was whether England should go to the aid of the weak Power against the two strong ones. Lord Palmerston and Lord Russell were in favour of vigorous intervention both before the war broke out, and after the failure of the London Conference. They undoubtedly encouraged Denmark to resist. They were held back by colleagues, against whose timidity the two veterans bitterly murmured to one another.[2] When the London Conference broke up, there was a universal apprehension that the active party in the Cabinet would still carry the day, and that Great Britain would find herself committed without an ally to the terrible peril of a war with Germany.

"At the end of June," as Cobden described it, "the Prime Minister announced that he was going to produce the protocols, and to state the decision of the Government upon the question. He gave a week's notice of this intention, and then I witnessed what has convinced me that we have achieved a revolution in our foreign policy. The whippers-in—you know what I mean—those on each side of the House

[1] *Speeches*, ii. 341.
[2] Mr. Ashley's *Life of Lord Palmerston*, ii. 437-8.

1864. who undertake to take stock of the number and the opinions
ÆT. 60. of their followers—the whippers-in during the week were taking soundings of the inclination of Members of the House of Commons. And then came up from the country such a manifestation of opinion against war, that day after day during that eventful week Member after Member from the largest constituencies went to those who acted for the Government in Parliament, and told them distinctly that they would not allow war on any such matters as Schleswig and Holstein. Then came surging up from all the great seats and centres of manufacturing and commercial activity one unanimous veto upon war for this matter of Schleswig and Holstein."[1] The result was that when Lord Palmerston came down to the House on that memorable afternoon of the 27th of June, it was to make the profoundly satisfactory, but profoundly humiliating announcement, that there was to be no war. They had ascertained, he said, that France declined to take any active part in support of Denmark. They had ascertained that Russia would take no part. The whole brunt of the effort requisite for dislodging the German troops would fall upon this country alone. Under these circumstances, they had not thought it consistent with their duty to advise the Sovereign to undertake the task. Lord Palmerston wound up his statement by menaces of great things to be done by the Government if Prussia and Austria went a step further in certain possible directions. These curiously hollow and ill-timed threats were received with loud shouts of derision, and Mr. Disraeli had the whole House with him when he denounced them as spiritless and senseless. He had the House with him when he went on to say that judging from the past, he would prefer that the affairs of the country should be conducted on the principles of the Member for Rochdale and the Member for Birming-

[1] *Speeches*, ii. 344.

ham. In that case the consequences might be the same, but 1864.
the position of England would be more consistent and more ÆT. 60.
dignified. At least these two gentlemen would threaten nobody; at least they would not have told Denmark that if she were attacked she would not find herself alone; at least they would not have exasperated Germany by declaiming in the full Parliament of England against the "aggravated outrages" of her policy; at least they would not have lured Denmark on by delusive counsels and fallacious hopes.

When in course of time Mr. Disraeli moved a vote of censure, Cobden did not let the opportunity slip. The inherent strength of his position made his speech even more free than usual from bitterness or personality. It was felt that the humiliating breakdown of the Foreign Office, and the meddling and impotent diplomacy of which Lord Palmerston was now the traditional representative, was a complete justification of the great principles of non-intervention as he had preached them for a whole generation. For the last time, as it was destined to be, he pressed home the old arguments for taking all reasonable and possible precautions for avoiding continental quarrels. "Our country," he said, "requires peace. Some people think it is very degrading, very base, that an Englishman should speak of his country as requiring peace, and as being entitled to enjoy its blessings; and if we allude to our enormous commercial and industrial engagements as a reason why we should avoid these petty embroilments, we are told that we are selfish and grovelling in our politics. But I say we were very wrong to take such measures as were calculated to extend our commerce, unless we were prepared to use prudential precautions to keep our varied manufacturing and mercantile operations free from the mischiefs of unnecessary war. You have in this country engagements of the most extensive and complicated kind. You have extended your operations

1864. during the last twenty-five years to such a degree, that you
ÆT. 60. are now actually exporting three times as much as you did twenty-five years ago—that is, your foreign commerce, and the manufactures on which it depends, have grown in a quarter of a century twice as much as they grew in a thousand years before."—(July 5.)

Lord Robert Cecil, who followed him in the debate, observed caustically that though Cobden was about to support the Government against the vote of censure, his enthusiasm for them was not very warm. The Member for Rochdale, he said, was about as good a friend of Her Majesty's Government, as Her Majesty's Government had been of the kingdom of Denmark; there was, however, the remarkable difference between the two cases, that whereas the Government gave to Denmark abundance of good words but no material aid, the honourable member was about to give the Government all his material aid, while he accompanied it with a full dose of what certainly could not be called fair words. When the division was taken, the Government won by a majority of eighteen, but Lord Palmerston must have felt that the policy of Free Trade had, among many other changes which it had wrought, finally taken the supreme control of peace and war out of the hands of the old territorial oligarchy.

Cobden made two other elaborate speeches in the course of the session. One was introductory of a series of resolutions on a subject on which he had long entertained strong views, the great extension of Government manufacturing establishments. In this, as in his views on the greater subject of Free Trade, Cobden was able to quote the illustrious authority of Burke in favour of the principle which he was now advocating, that the Government should not be allowed to manufacture for itself any article which could be obtained from private producers in a competitive

market.[4] The other important speech had been made earlier in the session, and carried his views of foreign policy into a field where their application was becoming, and has remained, more urgently necessary than it was even in the sphere of continental Europe. He moved a resolution to the effect that the policy of non-intervention by force of arms in the internal political affairs of foreign countries, which we profess to observe in Europe and America, should also be observed in our intercourse with the Empire of China.[5] What gave special point to the resolution was the fact that at this time we were in danger of repeating the same violence and the same impolicy which had worked such confusion in China, in forcing intercourse upon the people of Japan. Now, as on many occasions before, Cobden showed his sense of the danger that the cry for new markets might become as mischievous as the old cry for extended dominion. The enormous expansion of manufacturing industry had made some of the commercial class as ready to use violence in opening fresh fields for the sake of gain, as the aristocracy had ever been to use it in satisfying their national pride or military ambition. Cobden's demonstration of the perils which lie before us on this side, and he was not ashamed to consider moral as well as material perils, still remains as apt and as timely as it was in his own day.

Cobden wrote his longest letters at this time to Mr. Sumner and M. Chevalier. He protested, as we see, against the early tendencies of his American friend, to imitate the worst faults of the worst kind of European diplomacy; and to his French friend he put a question as to what might happen in 1870, which subsequent events made curiously significant.

[4] This excellent speech, which was Cobden's last performance in the House of Commons, is to be found in *Hansard*, clxxvi. July 22, 1864; and in Mr. Rogers's *Selection of Speeches*, i. 577.

[5] May 31, 1864.

Character of President Lincoln.

"*Jan.* 7. (*To Mr. Sumner.*)—You will soon begin to busy yourselves with the task of President-making. I hope you will re-elect Mr. Lincoln. He is rising in reputation in Europe apart from the success of the North. He possesses great moral qualities, which in the long-run tell more on the fortunes of the world in these days than mere intellect. I always thought his want of enlarged experience was a disadvantage to him. But he knows his own countrymen evidently, and that is the main point. And being a stranger to the rest of the world, he has the less temptation to embark in foreign controversies or quarrels. Nothing shows his solid sense more thanthe pertinacity with which he avoids all outside complications. His truthful elevation of character, and his somewhat stolid placidity of nature, put it quite beyond the power of other governments to fasten a quarrel on him, and inspire the fullest confidence in those who are committing themselves to the side of the North. I say all this on the assumption that he has irrevocably committed himself to 'abolition' as the result of the war. Any compromise on that question would cover your cause with external infamy, and render the sanguinary civil war with which you have desolated the North and South, a useless butchery."

The American War.

"*Midhurst, Aug.* 18, 1864. („)—I still look forward with unabated confidence to the triumph of the North. But I begin to speculate on the effect which the failure of Grant's campaign may have on your politics. Sometimes I speculate on the possibility of your imitating the course which political parties often follow here, and that your Democrats, who appear to be for peace, may come into power, and carry out even more successfully than your party could do the policy

of-war and abolition of slavery. Like Peel in his course on Free Trade and Catholic Emancipation, they would have the advantage of being sure of the support of the honest advocates of the policy they adopted, even although they were nominally in the ranks of their political opponents. What I most dread is your falling into political confusion in the North! That would be a severe blow to the principle of self-government everywhere." 1864. ÆT. 60.

Garibaldi's Visit to London.

"*May* 3, 1864. (*To M. Chevalier.*)—I thought you were now sufficiently acquainted with England not to attach undue importance to the Garibaldi affair, in so far as our ministers are concerned.[6] They of course were only acting a political part in order to catch a little of the popularity which for the moment surrounded the Italian hero. You do not of course suppose that Palmerston entertains any views in common with Garibaldi. It would be difficult indeed to show that he has any views at all beyond the wish to hold office by flattering the popular passions of the hour. The people were quite sincere in the homage they offered to the Italian.[7] They believe in his honesty and disinterestedness, and they know him to be a good *fighter!* There is a certain antique picturesqueness about the man too which attracts

[6] Garibaldi arrived in England on April 3. The wild enthusiasm with which he was received by the densest masses that ever attended a procession in London, made the Government uncomfortable. By some intrigue, the great hero of the European Revolution was hurried out of the country in the Duke of Sutherland's yacht.

[7] "*London, May* 10. (*To Mr. T. B. Potter.*)— . . . . The working people in the metropolis are very proud of *their* reception of Garibaldi, and those of the provinces are hoping for another opportunity of fêting him.

"When will the masses of this country begin to think of home politics? Our friend Bright observed, as he gazed from a window in Parliament Street on the tens of thousands that cheered the Italian, 'If the people would only make a few such demonstrations for themselves, we could do something for them.' But nothing except foreign politics seems to occupy the attention of the people, press, or parliament."

1864. ÆT 60. the sight-loving multitude. But there are perhaps other reasons why the middle classes share the enthusiasm of the populace. They believe him to be an enemy of the Pope, and you know what ardent Protestants we are! The Dukes and Duchesses took possession of Garibaldi to keep him out of the hands of the democrats, and when they had finished fêting him, they sent him straight home to Caprera in a Duke's yacht. It was expected that he would make a tour in the north of England, and all arrangements had been made to receive him in Manchester, Newcastle, and other places. But it was feared by his aristocratic acquaintances in London that if he went to the provinces he might be talking too revolutionarily and so he was persuaded to go away home, greatly to the disgust of the country democrats, who consider themselves 'done.' All this is merely the play of our political game, in which the so-called statesmen and ministers of the Crown do not act a very dignified part. The affairs of the Conference are not very promising. It seems that we are to be thankful that France and England are not on better terms. Last autumn France was apparently willing to go to war with Russia for Poland, and England declined. Now England seems to be desirous of going to war with Germany for Denmark, and France declines! So we have preserved peace in consequence of the suspension of the *entente cordiale*."

Free Trade in France.

"*27, Victoria Street, Westminster, June* 27. („)—I ought to have written to you more promptly, to thank you for the very kind invitation conveyed in your last letter. Be assured that it would give my wife and me very great pleasure to come and pay Madame Chevalier and you a long family visit in the Hérault. I am, however, afraid it will not be in my power to avail myself of your friendly

offer of hospitality. In the present state of my health I am obliged to look forward to the possibility of being compelled to go abroad in the *winter*. You know that the climate of England from May to October is the finest in the world, and gives no excuse for the invalid to leave home. I must therefore remain with my family in the summer, in the fear that my health may compel me to go to the south in the winter. I should be delighted to have the opportunity of passing a few weeks with you. Among other matters we could talk over the progress of Free Trade in France. I confess I am not satisfied that you do not continue to make further reforms, if only to guard against reaction in those already made. Time is passing. It is now four years since we arranged your tariff. Are you sure that in 1870 you will be so completely under the Free Trade *régime* as to prevent the government of that day (God knows what it may be) from going back to protection after the Anglo-French Treaty expires.

"We are in a critical political situation here. It is not easy to say what will happen in a week or two in the House. The Whigs are in a very sorry plight. But the Tories are so stupid that they seem hardly capable of profiting by the blunders of their opponents. The Opposition is to meet to-morrow at Lord Derby's, to consider the next step. If they move a resolution implying censure on the Government for not having gone to war, they will not be supported by a majority of the House, for both sides are very much opposed to war in behalf of the Danes. I have been much struck with this pacific sentiment in both parties. It is quite different from what it was previous to the Crimean War."

Tone of English Politics.

"*Midhurst, Nov.* 5. („)—I am glad to hear that you and Madame Chevalier are returning in good health

1864. to Paris. It is a long time since we exchanged letters.
ÆT. 60. But I have been vegetating here ever since the close of the Session of Parliament, and have had no news to communicate to distant friends. I have not yet made up my mind whether I shall leave home for a more sunny region this winter. It will depend on my health and the temperature of our English winter. I do not contemplate in any case going to Africa. It may be necessary for me to go to Southern Europe. But I confess I have a great repugnance to making a journey of a thousand miles merely on an errand of health.

"I have received the *Débats* with its article on the Metric system. We have made a first step; but when I think with what Chinese slowness we march in the path of reform, it makes me despair of living to see this useful change carried into effect.

"Our politics are very stagnant. How could they be otherwise? . . . But there is one great change amounting to a revolution which has been accomplished in our foreign policy. After the fiasco of last Session on the Danish question, our Foreign Office will never again attempt to involve us in any European entanglements for the Balance of Power, or for any dynastic purpose. Henceforth we shall observe an absolute abstention from continental politics. Non-intervention is the policy of all future governments in this country. So let the Grand Turk take care of himself, for we shall never fight his battle again. Until the American war is at an end we shall not recover our natural tone of politics in this country. I am still convinced the South will have to succumb. The geographical difficulties of separation have always appeared to me to be insurmountable. The mouth of the Mississippi alone is enough to prevent Jeff Davis from establishing his slave empire. It would be easier to establish an 'East Anglia'

by the secession of Kent and Essex at the mouth of the Thames, than to set up an independent State in Louisiana. It is not a question ever to be discussed. It is an impossibility. Have you not like myself been astonished at the financial resources of the North? I have just seen a pamphlet recently published in Washington by Mr. Blodget on the financial and industrial resources of the Union. I have been astounded by the facts and figures it gives from Government returns, railway traffics, &c., showing the almost incredible and fabulous *increase* of every kind of production in the Northern States during the last three years of war. It is quite clear that America stands on a different footing from the old world, and that its powers, whether in peace or war, are to be measured by a different standard. In comparing their powers of endurance or recovery, we must consider the one to be a man of twenty-five and the other of sixty. . . ."

International Law.

"*Sept.* 3. (*To Henry Ashworth, Esq.*)—The great fallacy that runs through Roundell Palmer's arguments is in the assumption that 'International Law' is a fixed and immutable code like the Ten Commandments, and that it would be wrong in us now to set up any new precedents or innovations. Now the whole of what is called International Maritime Law is mere precedents, generally emanating from our own Courts, and then adopted by the Americans *in times and circumstances quite different from the present.*

"We agreed to a fundamental change in the bases of the Maritime Code at the Congress of Paris after the Crimean War in 1856, and the great error has been that we did not seize the opportunity of the American war to still further relax the old system in the interests of non-combatants at sea. Instead of which Roundell Palmer, who is a lawyer

1864. and not a statesman, has been put forward as the exponent
ÆT. 60. of British policy, and he has laid down principles which will tell fearfully against us at a future time. . . . The declaration of Paris in 1856 *against privateering* becomes a mere pretentious hoax, when we see that ships such as the 'Georgia' and 'Tallahassee' are recognized as ships of war, merely because they carry a bit of paper called a 'Commission' instead of one called a 'Letter of Marque.' It is most important that you should disabuse our shipowners of their delusion that this declaration against privateering will be of any benefit to them after such precedents as we are now establishing in the event of our being at war."

The Law of Blockade.

"*Sept.* 9. („)—The Blockade Laws are about as rascally an invention as the old Corn Laws. Suppose Tom Sayers lived in a street, and on the opposite side lived a shopkeeper with whom he has been in the habit of dealing. Tom quarrels with his shopkeeper and forthwith sends him a challenge to fight, which is accepted. Tom, being a powerful man, sends word to each and every householder in the street that he is going to fight the shopkeeper, and that until he has finished fighting no person in the street must have any dealings with the shopkeeper. 'We have nothing to do with your quarrel,' say the inhabitants, 'and you have no right to stop our dealings with the shopkeeper.'

"The argument is just as good on a large scale as on a small one—for fifty millions as for one person. The various governments of England have been the chief and almost only supporters of the blockade laws, and no nation on earth will be so much injured by them, not to say a word of their injustice. The sooner the blockade laws follow the Corn

and Navigation laws the better it will be for all nations, and for England in particular." 1864. ÆT. 60.

The Danish War.

"*July* 1. (*To Mr. Ashworth.*)— . . . . The House of Commons is remarkably pacific. I have been much struck with the all but universal feeling among members on both sides against going to war on this Danish question. I really don't believe there are fifty men in the House, who, if their votes were to decide the question, would vote for war. It is the more remarkable inasmuch as the press had been very warlike, and full of threats and braggadocio. There was a section of the Cabinet quite ready to *do anything* for popularity. But the whipper-in carried such a report of the tone of the House, as to decide the Government to do nothing.

"I attribute this remarkable change in the temper of the House since the Crimean war to the enormous amount of material interests at stake.

"We are exporting now at the rate of 160,000,000*l.* a year, threefold our trade twenty years ago. This must have given an immense force to the Conservative peace principles of the country. The House of Commons represents the wealth of the country though not its numbers, and I have no doubt the members hear from all the great seats of our commercial ship-owning and manufacturing industries that the busy prosperous people there wish to be at peace. This is one of the effects which we advocates of Free Trade always predicted and desired as the consequence of extended commercial operations. But the manner in which the principle is now operating is most remarkable. . . . ."

"*July* 26. („)— . . . . I am glad you liked my last speeches. One has more and more the painful impression that it is after all mere barren talk. I do not see how any material improvement in public affairs is possible, so long as

1864. this old man at the head can contrive to use all parties for
ÆT. 60. his own ends. With Gladstone and Gibson for his colleagues, and with a tacit connivance from a section of the Tories, there can be no honesty in our party life and little chance for ridding ourselves of the incubus, excepting with the aid of Time, which I suppose will enforce a superannuation upon the old gentleman some day.

"It would have given me very great enjoyment to have visited you at your Highland box, but I go quietly among my children at Dunford during the fine weather, for I always feel under the liability of being induced to leave home for a southern clime in the winter. During the Session I see little of my young people, and I really think it is as healthful as it is pleasant to relax after the turmoil of the House and the clubs among the minds of children. I remember hearing Wakley say in the House when O'Connell first showed symptoms of giving way, that if he would withdraw from politics and live with his grand-children, he might last for ten years. But he died in a twelvemonth."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SPEECH AT ROCHDALE—THE LAND QUESTION—CORRESPONDENCE —LAST DAYS AND DEATH.

In November Cobden went down to Rochdale to make his annual speech to his constituents. He was not in very good spirits when he started, and the exertion of travelling and of speaking to an enormous audience lowered his powers still further. It was the largest meeting on one floor that he had ever attended. The speech itself is one of his longest.[1] Mr. Bright, who was absent at Leamington, said that when he read it, he marvelled how Cobden could have made such a speech when times were so dull. Besides being one of his longest, it is perhaps the one that gives the best idea of his manner, and opens the easiest view to his theory of the foreign policy which is proper for Great Britain in her existing circumstances. We see in it to perfection what Mr. Disraeli commended in him, that careful art of avoiding to drive his arguments to an extremity, which was one of the secrets of his singular persuasiveness.

It was in this speech that he made the memorable declaration on the Land Question. We have already seen (above p. 429) what he said the year before in the same place: that the English peasantry had no parallel on the face of the earth; that there is no other country in the world where the

[1] *Speeches*, ii. 339. November 23, 1864.

1864. peasantry is entirely divorced from the land.[1] He now
ÆT. 60. said:—"If I were five-and-twenty or thirty, instead of being unhappily twice that number of years, I would take Adam Smith in hand—I would not go beyond him, I would have no politics in it—I would take Adam Smith in hand, and I would have a League for free trade in land just as we had a League for free trade in corn. You will find just the same authority in Adam Smith for one as for the other; and if it were taken up, as it must be taken up to succeed, not as a political, revolutionary, Radical, Chartist notion, but taken up on politico-economical grounds, the agitation would be certain to succeed."[2] What it was that he precisely meant by free trade in land he did not more particularly specify. His reference to Adam Smith is enough to show that he contemplated the abolition of entails and other artificial means of tying land up in long settlements; and like all men of sense, he constantly advocated improved facilities in the machinery of transfer. How much further he was prepared to go, we cannot tell; but there is no evidence that, in England and Scotland, he was inclined to favour the French system of compulsory partition, and there is abundant evidence that he was not likely to sympathize with any of the vague projects for what their authors call the nationalization of the land. On the other hand, it is probable that he would have been friendly to the legislative recognition, not only in Ireland but in Great Britain, of the principle of Tenant Right. In one of the most effective of his speeches in the time of the Corn Law, which has been already referred to (see above, vol. i. p. 320), he insisted upon security of tenure as the first condition of prosperity alike to landlord, tenant, and labourer. This security he expected to find in leases, that should contain

[1] *Speeches*, ii. 116.

[2] *Speeches*, ii. 367. See *Wealth of Nations*, Bk. iii., chap. ii.

none of those restrictive covenants which now so constantly hamper the tenant in the manner of applying his capital and carrying on his business. Perhaps he might have been persuaded that leases themselves are found by the people concerned to be a practical impediment to the free movement of capital; and in this way might have come round to such a form of legislative Tenant Right as would give the security of a lease without involving an inconveniently long duration. However this may be, we have as a matter of fact no complete scheme of Cobden's views on the English Land Question.[4] His solution of the question of the same name in Ireland, we have already seen (above pp. 28, 29, 50, 97). He would "give Ireland to the Irish."

Although the few sentences which concerned a Land League did most to startle attention at the moment, Cobden's last speech dealt much more fully with other topics, and covered a very wide space of political ground. The exhaustion after such an effort was severe. "I should have been well enough," Cobden told Mr. Paulton, "if I could have gone to bed for four and twenty hours after the speech. But the next day Mr. Kemp had a reception of two hundred of the leading Liberals, and I spent the whole evening in shaking hands and incessant talking to relays of friends." The journey home made things worse. He was afraid to rest in London, lest he should find himself compelled by illness to remain there. On the whole, when he reached home, he considered that he had escaped tolerably well, but he made up his mind that he must never attend another public meeting in the winter season. As it

[4] Mr. Thorold Rogers, who had many conversations with him on the subject, says that by free trade in land Cobden meant "the extension of the principle of free exchange in all its fulness to landed estates, and the removal of all restrictions on its transfer, either voluntarily, should the owner desire to sell it, or involuntarily if the owner becomes embarrassed." —*Cobden and Modern Political Opinion*, chap. iii. p. 89.

1865. was, he found that he had suffered more harm than he
ÆT. 60. supposed. Two months after his return he gave the following account of himself to Mr. Paulton:—

"*Jan.* 25.—I have never before had such a shake. I came back from my imprudent trip to the North out of order from top to toe. Besides my old foe (which the Doctor here calls 'nervous asthma'), from which my breathing was so obstructed that I could hardly move a limb, I had an attack of bronchitis, which threatened to extend to my lungs, and my stomach was much disordered with feverish symptoms. Our little apothecary was very assiduous, and I am much better. The asthma has entirely disappeared, and I can walk upstairs without any of the old symptoms. But I am thinner, and without air or exercise how can any one be well? I have not been out of doors since I returned home. This cold weather keeps up the old irritation in my throat, and I am not free from cough. In fact what I want is a fortnight of July sunshine. This has been the most disagreeable winter I have ever known here. Generally we get sunshine in the middle of the day, if even for only two or three hours. This year, although the average temperature has not been lower than usual, there have been great fluctuations, with much moisture and cloudiness. At present the ground is covered with snow of unusual depth.

"I am deeply obliged to you and Mrs. Paulton for your kind invitation. At present I cannot entertain the idea of going to town. I should not be able to attend the House, and in anything like my present state of health, home is the only proper place for me. Besides there never was a time when so little motive existed to lead a man to run risks of life and health in the fulfilment of his public duties. . . . . The talk in official circles is that the election is to take place in June. That is the season of the year which will

suit me best. But really what right has anybody to pretend to take the burden of affairs of state on his shoulders, when he has arrived at an age when he can hardly bear the weight of his own infirmities? I ought to give up public life. So nauseous is the present state of parliamentary parties, that if I knew the general election would give the old Premier a renewed rule, I should secretly pray that Mr. Brett[5] would relieve me from the task of being a further witness, if not accomplice, to the imposture!" 1865. ÆT. 60.

His time was filled by vigilant observation of affairs, and by his unfailing practice of correspondence. The struggle in America occupied his thoughts incessantly, partly because he was looking to the questions that would remain for adjustment after the war had come to an end. One of his last letters to Mr. Sumner touched on this point:—

"*Jan.* 11, 1865.—I agree with a remark in the concluding passage of your last letter, that you are fighting the battle of liberalism in Europe as well as the battle of freedom in America. It is only necessary to observe who are your friends and who your opponents in the Old World, to be satisfied that great principles are at stake in your terrible conflict. But it is not by victories in the field alone that you will help the cause of the masses in Europe. End when it may, the civil war will, in the eyes of mankind, have conferred quite as much 'glory,' so far as mere fighting goes, on the South as on the North. It is in your superiority in other things that you can alone by your example elevate the Old World. I confess I am very jealous of your taking a course which seems to hold up our old doings as an excuse for your present short-comings. Hence I was sorry to see your republication of the old indictment against us in your very able and learned pamphlet. My answer is, that your

[5] The present Lord Justice Brett. He was now before the constituency of Rochdale as the Conservative candidate.

1865. ÆT. 60. only title to existence as a Republic is that you are supposed to be superior to what we were sixty years ago. Had you returned the 'Florida' to Bahia without a moment's delay, cashiered the captain of the 'Wochusett,' and offered to pay for the support of the survivors who were dependent on those who were killed or drowned in that wicked outrage, your friends would have felt some inches taller here. *That* would have been the true answer to the taunts of our Tory press, and not the disinterment of the misdeeds of our Tory Government to show that they did something almost as bad as the Federal commander.

"I was much pleased with your speech on the Canadian difficulty in the South, when you spoke of avoiding all quarrels with other countries, and devoting yourself to the one sole object of putting down the rebellion. I am not blind to the fact that very grave questions will stand over for adjustment between your country and ours. Some of them, such as the injury done to your whole shipping interest by the losses and destruction of a port, can hardly be settled by governments. They will, I fear, invite future retaliations on our shipping by citizens of your country, if we should ever go to war. But all these questions must be postponed till your war is ended, and then probably the whole world may be ready for a thorough revolution in international maritime law. It will be for you to show the way."

The topic of national expenditure kept its place in his mind, and the plans for the defence of Canada stirred his liveliest disgust. He expressed his views in two elaborate letters to Mr. Gladstone, with a sort of forlorn hope that they might through him obtain a hearing in the Cabinet. Excepting Mr. Gladstone himself, however, and Mr. Gibson, there was nobody in the Cabinet who felt the least inclination to listen. Even Mr. Gladstone thought that his corre-

spondent did less than justice to the Government, and more than justice to the Canadians. Mr. Bright, meanwhile, was working for their views in a different direction, insisting on the proposition for which he had been fighting ever since the repeal of the Corn Law, that nothing good could be done until the representation was improved. He began the new year with a powerful speech at Birmingham, to Cobden's great satisfaction :—

"*Jan.* 16. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—I see your meeting at Birmingham is fixed. You will, I suppose, have something to say about Reform. What is wanted is to slay and bury those delusive projects which have of late owed their existence to men who wish to mystify the simple question of principle, and lead the public astray after crotchetty details of their own. Of these Lord Grey and Buxton are the most notable. But I suppose you are aware that Stuart Mill has endorsed Hare's incomprehensible scheme. It is a pity that Mill, who on the whole is so admirable in his sympathies and tendencies, should give his sanction to these novelties. (I got a letter the other day from an old Leaguer in Australia, saying that the Protectionists there are quoting Mill to justify a young community in resorting for a time to Protection.) It has always appeared to me that the best way to meet the wishes of those who honestly fear that particular classes or bodies of the community may be unrepresented, is to make the electoral districts as diversified as possible. With this view I would allow each constituency to return one representative. Thus, for instance, if Birmingham had six members, they should be elected by six wards. This would give every section of the community the opportunity of suiting itself. The idea of giving representation to minorities is an absurdity. It strikes at the very foundations of representative government by majorities. It ignores the fact that *opinion* is always represented by minori-

1865. ÆT. 60. ties as well as majorities, or why should there be party divisions at all?[6]

"Has it ever occurred to you to ascertain what was the old borough franchise? In Forster's 'Life of Eliot,' giving a very detailed account of the parliamentary and constitutional struggle between the House of Commons and Charles I., at the period antecedent to the revolutionary conflict, there are constant notices of trials before Parliamentary Committees to decide the question whether the right of voting belonged to the 'commonalty in general,' or to privileged corporations or classes. The decisions seem to have been almost always in favour of the 'commonalty in general.' By this phrase I suppose was meant all householders at least. I dare say the polling-papers are preserved of the old elections, and it would be curious to see the proportions the voters bore to the whole population. I see it stated that in 1628 there was a contested election for Coventry, when the successful candidates had a majority of 600 votes.

[6] The last letter that Cobden wrote was on this subject. It was addressed a week before his death (March 22, 1865) to Mr. T. B. Potter, who had sent him a letter from Mr. Mill:—"Everything from him is entitled to respectful consideration. But I confess, after the best attention to the proposed representation of minorities which I can give it, I am so stupid as to fail to see its merits. He speaks of 50,000 electors having to elect five members, and that 30,000 may elect them all, and to obviate this he would give the 20,000 minority two votes. But I would give only one vote to each elector, and one representative to each constituency. Instead of the 50,000 returning five in a lump, I would have five constituencies of 10,000, each returning one member. Thus, if the metropolis, for example, were entitled, with a fair distribution of electoral power, to 40 votes, I would divide it into 40 districts or wards, each to return one member; and in this way every class and every variety of opinion would have a chance of a fair representation. Belgravia, Marylebone, St. James's, St. Giles's, Whitechapel, Spitalfields, &c., would each and all have their members. I don't know any better plan for giving all opinions a chance of being heard; and, after all, it is opinions that are to be represented. If the minority have a faith that their opinions, and not those of the majority, are the true ones, then let them agitate and discuss until their principles are in the ascendant. This is the motive for political action and the healthy agitation of public life."

There must have been a much larger proportion of the whole population voting then than is polled now. 1865. Æt. 60.

"I was talking with Durrant Cooper, one of the leading members of our Sussex Archæological Society, and told him if instead of devoting a volume a year to the remains of old castles and monasteries, they would give us some facts throwing light upon the social and political condition of the inhabitants in former ages, it would be a much more useful employment of their talents. It is astonishing what a mass of facts of old date are in existence. The secretary of our County Society once said that an itinerary of King John's reign, giving his whereabouts every day of his life, could be given if worth the trouble, with as much accuracy as that of William the Fourth.

"I have no recent letters from America. Goldwin Smith says he has come back a confirmed radical and free churchman, and less impatient because more assured of liberal progress. . . His pen is a power in the State."

"*Jan.* 22. („)—I hope you have returned safely home, and if you are well after your double effort at Birmingham, I congratulate you on your bronchial organization. I was satisfied and pleased with your speech in the Town Hall. I think you took a very wise course in using the language of warning to those ruling factions who are alone responsible for the present state of the Reform question. Not that it will have the desired effect in that quarter, where nothing but fear of something worse happening ever leads to the concession of any reform. Unfortunately, in the case of the proposed change in the representation, involving, as our privileged classes believe, the destruction of their privileges, nothing worse than this spectre can be presented to their imagination; and they will contend against a measure which would make the people the depository of political power in this country, as they would against a revolution of the old

1865. French model. But you have done your duty in introducing
ÆT. 60. to them the five or six millions who may at any time set their eyes on the portals of the constitution with a demand for admittance which could not be resisted; and you have given them this warning in language with which no one, however fastidious, can quarrel, and yet which nobody can fail to understand. But, after all, I sometimes think that we almost lend ourselves to an imposture in arguing on these matters, as though we believed we were appealing to a tribunal which could be swayed by appeals to reason and the principles of justice."

Whilst he was in this mood of discouragement, he received a letter from Mr. Gladstone, written (Feb. 10) on behalf of the Government and by desire of Lord Palmerston, offering him the office of Chairman of the Board of Audit. It was proposed to reconstitute the Board, and to strengthen and raise the position of its head; the Comptrollership of the Exchequer was to be united to the Chair of the Board of Audit; and the salary was to be raised to 2000*l.* a year. Although the duties of the office, Mr. Gladstone said, would require very high qualities for their proper discharge, they would not be very laborious. The tender of such an office was not to be taken as an adequate acknowledgment of his distinguished and long continued public services, but it was the highest civil office which the Government had it in their power to give. After taking a couple of days to think over the proposal, though probably his decision was made at once, Cobden declined it:—

"*Midhurst, Feb.* 13, 1865.

"MY DEAR MR. GLADSTONE,

"I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter written on behalf of the Government, offering in the kindest terms to place at my option the post of Chairman of the Board of Audit, about to be vacated by Mr. Romilly. Owing to the

state of my health, I am precluded from taking any office which involves the performance of stated duties at all seasons of the year, or leaves a sense of responsibility for the fulfilment of those duties by others. I have for some time been liable to recurring attacks, during certain conditions of the atmosphere, of what medical authorities call nervous asthma. While giving me no pain, it disqualifies me for active exertion during its visitations, and I am certain of exemption from it only in warm weather. I cannot live in London during the season of fog and frost. Here there are good and sufficient reasons why I should for the rest of my days be exempt from the cares of salaried official life. But were my case different, still, while sensible of the kind intentions which prompted the offer, it would assuredly not be consulting my welfare to place me in the post in question, with my known views respecting the nature of our finance. Believing, as I do, that while the income of the Government is derived in a greater proportion than in any other country from the taxation of the humblest classes, its expenditure is to the last degree wasteful and indefensible, it would be almost a penal appointment to consign me for the remainder of my life to the task of passively auditing our finance accounts. I fear my health would sicken and my days be shortened by the nauseous ordeal. It will be better that I retain my seat in Parliament as long as I am able in any tolerable degree to perform its duties, where I have at least the opportunity of protesting, however unavailingly, against the Government expenditure. But I am wandering from the text of your kind letter, for which I heartily thank you, especially for the postscript,[7] and I remain,

"Very truly yours,

"RICHARD COBDEN."

7 The postscript was to the effect that if he were disposed to talk the matter over, Mr. Gladstone was at his service.

1865. Æт. 60. In acknowledging the letter, Mr. Gladstone expressed his satisfaction that Cobden so clearly appreciated the spirit in which the offer had been made by the Government, and especially by Lord Palmerston. He went on to add that he did not think the most faithful discharge of the duties of the office would have made the incumbent of it in any sense whatever responsible for the expenditure of the country, or would even have brought it before him in any marked manner in the career of ordinary duty. None of Cobden's friends have ever doubted the propriety of his decision, though it is within the range of possibility that if it had been otherwise his days might have been prolonged.

At this time Mr. Bright wrote to him (Feb. 23), saying that Mr. Seymour Fitzgerald was to talk on Canadian Fortifications some day soon. "I wish," Mr. Bright said, "that you could be in the House when he comes on. You understand the details of the question better than any other man in the House, and I think you could knock over the stupid proposition to spend English money in fortifications at Quebec. I shall probably say something if you are not there, but I hope the matter may not be debated till you are in town." A week later, Cobden received the last letter that he was destined to have from his friend. It was a note (Mar. 3), saying by what train Mr. Bright would come down to Midhurst on the following afternoon. Cobden now occasionally ventured out into the air during the middle of the day, and he and Mr. Bright took easy walks together on the terrace at Dunford or in the lanes. On one occasion, looking in the direction of the church, Cobden said, "My boy is buried there, and it will not be long before I am there with him." It was, indeed, little more than a month.

Three final letters belong to this date :—

"*Feb.* 23. (*To Mr. T. B. Potter.*)—I have forwarded Lord ——'s letter to Mr. Goldwin Smith. I observe that he

assigns as the main cause for the hostility of the ruling class (for the masses we know are on the other side) to the North to the fact that the Americans have (previous to the war as well as since) shown a disposition to go to war with us. This is the old indictment, and I have but one answer to it. The United States maintained previous to the outbreak of the Civil War an army of 17,000 men and a navy of 7000, and for ten years previous had never commissioned a line-of-battle ship. Yet in her dealings with England and Europe, with their standing armies of half a million of men, and their navies of scores of line-of-battle ships, the United States carried, we are now told, matters with a high hand! Was there ever a stronger admission of the superiority of moral force and of republicanism? When a Bobadil or a Drawcansir is represented on the stage, he is always armed to the teeth. But here you have an unarmed nation bullying great military and naval powers. Would to Heaven that France, Russia, Austria, England, Italy, and Prussia would follow this fashion of bullying! . . . .

"What is running in Lord ——'s head is the common fallacy of confounding the language of certain newspapers and parties in America with the acts of the Government. Is it fair to forget that there are nearly two millions of persons who were born in Ireland living in the United States, and perhaps as many more the offspring of Irish parents, all of whom are animated with the most intense hatred towards England? New York city alone at the last census had 260,000 Irish, actually more than the population of Dublin in 1851, thus making New York the greatest Irish city in the world. These people have their newspapers, their orators, and they have votes. Considering how demonstrative they are, it is not wonderful that their voices are heard at every period of excitement. But what shall be said of the fairness of those Englishmen, who, knowing

1865. ÆT. 60. that the misery and depopulation of Ireland has sprung from centuries of oppression and outrageous injustice on the part of England, follow the Irish to America, and instead of frankly acknowledging that *they* have grounds of resentment towards *us*, fasten their quarrel on the Americans who have given them an asylum!

"Shall I confess the thought that troubles me in connexion with this subject? I have seen with disgust the altered tone with which America has been treated since she was believed to have committed suicide or something like it. In our diplomacy, our press, and with our public speakers, all hastened to kick the dead lion. Now in a few months everybody will know that the North will triumph, and what troubles me is lest I should live to see our ruling class—which can understand and respect *power* better than any other class—grovel once more, and more basely than before, to the giant of democracy. This would not only inspire me with disgust and indignation, but with shame and humiliation. I think I see signs that it is coming. The *Times* is less insolent and Lord Palmerston is more civil."

"*March* 15. (*To Mr. Bright.*)—I have read through the whole of the debate on Monday. The alteration of tone is very remarkable. It is clear that the homage which was refused to justice and humanity will be freely given to success. No part of your speech was to me more acceptable than where you threw in the parenthetical reflection that the sacrifices of the North were not to put Bourbons on the throne of France or to keep the Turk in Europe. Still, do not let us deceive ourselves. There will be a back reckoning. It is all very well to talk of future peace and goodwill, but the Americans will feel that they have a substantial wrong to redress with this country. In international law if there be such a thing) a nation is a unit, and the *whole* is

responsible to another people for the acts of its individuals. 1865.
Parties will from this moment be looking for political capital Æt. 60
in America to the resentment everywhere felt against our shipbuilders and merchants. There is not an aspirant for the presidency, even including our dear friend Sumner, who will not be ready to take the stump on the ground of 'indemnity to American citizens for losses by the *Alabama*.' I will trust none of their leading politicians except Lincoln, whose political life closes with his next term.

"Now the money question is really the smallest part of the issue between the two countries arising out of the experience we have had of the present state of international maritime law, and the interest we have, beyond all other countries, in altering it. But where is the statesmanship to deal with the problem, when nobody seems to look beyond the exigencies of the next twenty-four hours? I feel confident there can never be a war between us and America. The mass of the people here must every day feel that they have a far higher stake in the United States than in the country of their birth.

"I was glad you brought out so clearly the homestead law. When it is fairly driven home to the apprehension of our dull landless millions that the people of the United States hold the largest and richest unoccupied domain in the world, not for great feudal monopolists like the Demidoffs or the Sutherlands, not even for the exclusive use of American citizens, but in trust for the landless millions aforesaid, to every one of whom is offered a farm as large as he can cultivate, and a vote six months after his settlement (which is the rule in the West), it will be impossible to marshal in hostile array the masses of this country against that people. But though the governing classes will not be able to involve us in war, they will, I think, if they continue to hold their present rule in this country, bring on us some

1865. great humiliation from America, which never could happen if
ÆT. 60. the people as a whole controlled the politics of the State."

"*March* 20. (*To Colonel Cole.*)—The most interesting debate of the session hitherto has been on Canadian affairs. This is a subject of increasing interest, and the projected confederation of the British North American colonies will bring it into great prominence this session. It seems to be generally accepted here as a desirable change, though I fail to discover any immediate interest which the British public have in the matter. There is no proposal to relieve us from the expense and risk of pretending to defend those colonies from the United States—a task which, by the way, everybody admits to be beyond our power. Then I cannot see what substantial interest the British people have in the connexion to compensate them for guaranteeing three or four millions of North Americans living in Canada, &c., against another community of Americans living in their neighbourhood. We are told indeed of the 'loyalty' of the Canadians; but this is an ironical term to apply to people who neither pay our taxes nor obey our laws, nor hold themselves liable to fight our battles, who would repudiate our right to the sovereignty over an acre of their territory, and who claim the right of imposing their own customs duties, even to the exclusion of our manufactures. We are two peoples to all intents and purposes, and it is a perilous delusion to both parties to attempt to keep up a sham connexion and dependence which will snap asunder if it should ever be put to the strain of stern reality. It is all very well for our Cockney newspapers to talk of defending Canada at all hazards. It would be just as possible for the United States to sustain Yorkshire in a war with England, as for us to enable Canada to contend against the United States. It is simply an impossibility. Nor must we forget that the only serious danger of a quarrel between those two

neighbours arises from the connexion of Canada with this country. In my opinion it is for the interest of both that we should as speedily as possible sever the political thread by which we are as communities connected, and leave the individuals on both sides to cultivate the relations of commerce and friendly intercourse as with other nations. I have felt an interest in this confederation scheme, because I thought it was a step in the direction of an amicable separation. I am afraid from the last telegrams that there may be some difficulty, either in your province or in Lower Canada, in carrying out the project. Whatever may be the wish of the colonies will meet with the concurrence of our Government and Parliament. We have recognized their right to control their own fate, even to the point of asserting their independence whenever they think fit, and which we know to be only a question of time. All this makes our present responsible position towards them truly one-sided and ridiculous. There seems to be something like a dead-lock in the political machinery of the Canadas, which has driven their leading statesmen into the measure of confederation. I suspect that there has been some demoralization and corruption in that quarter, and that it is in part an effort to purify the political system by letting in new blood. There is also, I think, an inherent weakness in the parody of our old English constitution, which is performed on the miniature scenes of the colonial capitals, with their speeches from the throne, votes of confidence, appeals to the country, changes of ministry, &c., and all about such trumpery issues that the game at last becomes ridiculous in the eyes of both spectators and actors."

A few days after Mr. Bright had left him, Cobden found himself unable to resist the desire to take a part in the discussion on the Canadian Fortifications, and on the 21st of March, in bitter weather, he travelled up to London, accompanied

1865. by Mrs. Cobden and his second daughter. Instead of going
ÆT. 60. as usual to the house of Mr. Paulton or some other friend, he had taken lodgings in Suffolk Street; it was close to the Athenæum, and as near as he could get to the House of Commons. On his arrival at his journey's end, after writing a few letters, according to his indefatigable custom, he was immediately prostrated by an attack of asthma. He lay through the bleak days watching the smoke blown from the chimneys of the houses opposite, and vainly hoping that the wind would change its quarter from the merciless east. At the end of a week he seemed convalescent, and was allowed to see one or two friends. The apparent recovery only lasted a few hours, and was followed by a sharper attack than before. For a day or two his wife and daughter watched with painful alternations of hope and fear. On the 1st of April the asthma became congestive, and bronchitis supervened. It was now evident that he would not recover. He was able to make his will, and occasionally to say a few words to those who were watching by his bedside.

Mr. Bright called in the evening, but was not allowed to see him. Early the next morning (Sunday, April 2) he called again; and as all chance of a rally had now vanished, he took his place by the side of the dying man. One other friend was in the room, Mr. George Moffatt, whose intimacy with Cobden had been long and sincere. They saw that his end was very close. As the bells of St. Martin's Church were ringing for the morning service, the mists of death began to settle heavily on his brow, and his ardent, courageous, and brotherly spirit soon passed tranquilly away. Many tears were shed in homes where Cobden's name was revered and loved when the tidings that he was dead reached them.

At the time of his death he was within two months of the completion of his sixty-first year. One afternoon in

the summer of 1856, he and a friend took it into their 1865.
heads, as there was nothing of importance going on in ÆT. 60.
the House, to stroll into the Abbey. His friend had never been inside before, as he confessed that he had never been inside St. Paul's Cathedral, though he had passed it every day of his life for fifteen years. They strolled about among the monuments for a couple of hours, and the natural remark fell from his companion that perhaps one day the name of Cobden too would figure among the heroes. "I hope not," said Cobden, "I hope not. My spirit could not rest in peace among these men of war. No, no, cathedrals are not meant to contain the remains of such men as Bright and me." He was buried by the side of his son in the little churchyard at Lavington, on the slope of the hill among the pine woods. A large concourse gathered round his grave, some of them illustrious, others of them obscure, some his companions in past victories, others his fellow-workers in causes that still seemed forlorn; but all bound together for the moment in attachment to the memory of a frank and cordial friend, and a clear-sighted and faithful citizen.

"Before we left the house," Mr. Bright has told us, "standing by me and leaning on the coffin, was his sorrowing daughter, one whose attachment to her father seems to have been a passion scarcely equalled among daughters. She said, 'My father used to like me very much to read to him the Sermon on the Mount.' His own life was to a large extent—I speak it with reverence and with hesitation—a sermon based upon that best, that greatest of all sermons. His was a life of perpetual self-sacrifice."

On the day after Cobden's death, when the House of Commons met, the Prime Minister commemorated the loss which they had all sustained in a few kindly sentences. It was

1865. Æт. 60. reserved for Mr. Disraeli to strike a deeper note. "There is this consolation," he said, "remaining to us when we remember our unequalled and irreparable losses, that these great men are not altogether lost to us, that their words will be often quoted in this House, that their examples will often be referred to and appealed to, and that even their expressions may form a part of our discussions. There are, indeed, I may say, some members of Parliament, who though they may not be present, are still members of this House, are independent of dissolutions, of the caprices of constituencies, and even of the course of time. I think that Mr. Cobden was one of these men."

While the House was still under an impression from these words which was almost religious, Mr. Bright, yielding to a marked and silent expectation, rose and tried to say how every expression of sympathy that he had heard had been most grateful to his heart. "But the time," he went on in broken accents, "which has elapsed since in my presence the manliest and gentlest spirit that ever quitted or tenanted a human form took its flight is so short, that I dare not even attempt to give utterance to the feelings by which I am oppressed. I shall leave to some calmer moment when I may have an opportunity of speaking before some portion of my countrymen the lesson which I think may be learned from the life and character of my friend. I have only to say that after twenty years of most intimate and almost brotherly friendship, I little knew how much I loved him until I had lost him." As Homer says of Nestor and Ulysses, so of these two it may be said that they never spoke diversely either in the assembly or in the council, but were always of one mind, and together advised the English with understanding and with counsel how all might be for the best.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CONCLUSION.

A CHARACTER like that of Cobden calls for no elaborate attempt at analysis. In motive and purpose he was the most candid and direct of mankind. Though he was amply endowed with that practical wisdom which Aristotle describes as the first quality of the man who meddles with government, all his aims, his sympathies, his maxims were as open and transparent as the day. Nobody could be more free from the spirit of Machiavellian calculation. He had in a full measure the gift of tact, but it came from innate considerateness and good feeling, and not either from social art or from hidden subtlety of nature. Of Cobden's qualities as a public man enough has been said already.[1] Some of his private traits may well be recorded beside them.

It is easy to know how a nature so open and expansive would win the attachment of friends. In his own house, where public men do not always seek the popularity that is the very breath of their nostrils abroad, he was tender, solicitous, forbearing, never exacting. Most of his preparation for speeches and pamphlets was done amid the bustle of a young household, and he preferred to work amid the sociable play of his little children. His thoroughly pleasant and genial temper made him treat everybody who approached him as a friend. Few men have attracted friends of such widely different type.

[1] See above, vol. i., chapter ix.

The hard-headed man of business and the fastidious man of letters were equally touched by the interest of his conversation and the charm of his character. There must have been something remarkable about one who won the admiration of Prosper Mérimée, and the cordial friendship of Mr. Goldwin Smith, and the devoted service of strenuous practical men like Mr. Slagg and Mr. Thomasson. His exceeding amiability was not insipid. He was never bitter, but he knew how to hit hard, and if a friend did wrong and public mischief came of it, Cobden did not shrink from the duty of dealing faithfully with him. We have seen with what vigour he denounced the doings of Sir John Bowring in China, and the supposed backslidings of Sir William Molesworth in the Cabinet.[2]

He usually extended his good-nature even to the busy-bodies who pester public men with profitless correspondence. When strangers who wrote to him committed the absurd offence of subscribing to their letters a hieroglyphic that no one could read, he only said to them in reply that it was a pity that some system of rewards and punishments could not be devised to make people at least sign their own names plainly. It was very seldom that he allowed himself to be provoked into dealing a blow to the impertinence which used to protest against his un-English conduct, his want of patriotism, and the other cries of that stupid party which is not by any means exclusively composed of Tories. Old soldiers in the army of the League especially were apt to suppose that this accident gave them a right to lecture him. One of them, an entire stranger to Cobden, wrote a vehement pro-

[2] See above, p. 160. A sharper dispute took place between Cobden and Sir William Molesworth on the 3rd of August, 1855. The latter had gone out of his way to use some hard words about the peace party. Cobden showed, with a good deal of pungency, that until he went into the Cabinet Sir William Molesworth avowedly shared his opinions to the letter.—*Hansard*, cxxxix.

test against his un-English conduct in siding with the North in the American war, and justified his remonstrance by the fact that he had once belonged to the Anti-Corn-Law League. "Permit me to say," said Cobden, "that you must have been out of place in our ranks, for no one can be a consistent enemy of monopoly, who does not tolerate an honest difference of opinion on every question. Your note is a laughable assumption of superiority and authority, where I can recognize neither."[3]

It was his fortune to be engaged in incessant conflict all through his life, and we have had occasion to mark the dauntless buoyancy with which he sprung time after time down to the very end into the breach, and waged his active battle almost single-handed against Lord Palmerston and his immovable host. What makes it the more admirable is that Cobden was not by nature inclined to this ceaseless attitude of oppugnancy. There is a story that, going down to the House on one of these occasions, he said to his companion, "I hate having to beard in this way hundreds of well-meaning wrong-headed people, and to face the look of rage with which they regard me. I had a thousand times rather not have to do it, but it must be done." Even in his sharpest speeches we are conscious of a sentiment of this kind. He was unsparing in the trenchancy of his argument, but he never sought to hurt individuals, not even Lord Palmerston. "I believe he is perfectly sincere," Cobden said, "for the longer I live, the more I believe in men's sincerity." There could be no better sign of a pure and generous character, than that so honourable a conviction as this should have been the lesson of his experience.

Cobden's conversation, like his public addresses, was simple, reasonable, devoid of striking figures of speech, but bright, eager, and expansive; and, as Mérimée said,[4] it was

[3] November 12, 1864.

[4] See above, i. 198.

the outcome of an extremely interesting mind, and unlike English conversation in being quite free from commonplaces. On religious questions he was for the most part silent. When he was in the country, he went to church like other people. All his personal habits were in the highest degree simple and frugal. He was indifferent to the pleasures of the table, he did not care to acquire fine things of any kind, and he had none of the passion of the collector. Politics were the one commanding interest of his life.

But it is well once more to note that what Cobden talked about and cared for was real politics, not the game of party. Politics in his sense meant the large workings of policy, not the manœuvres of members of Parliament. When the newspaper was unfolded in the morning, that furnished him and his friends or his guests with topics for the day. Events all over the world were deliberately discussed in relation to wide and definite general principles; their bearings were worked out in the light of what Cobden conceived to be the great económical and social movements of the world. This is what makes a real school in politics. It was in the same spirit that Cobden read books and talked with bookish men. His point of view was always actual, not in the sense of the vulgar practical man, but social and political. When he read a book, he read it as all reading should be done, with a view to life and practice, and not in the way of refined self-indulgence. The *Life of Eliot* made him think of the state of the franchise in those old times, and Motley's *History of the Netherlands*, which interested him greatly, suggested to him that Queen Elizabeth carried her aversion to European crusading in the Palmerstonian sense almost too far.[a] To the Ilyssus we may confess that Cobden was a

[a] "Why, when I read Motley's *History of the Rise of the Dutch Republic*—an admirable book, which everybody should read—when I read the history of the Netherlands, and when I see how that struggling community, with

little unjust, but the point of his good-humoured sarcasm has been much misrepresented. He was, he said in his last speech, a great advocate of culture of every kind. What he sought was that young men should be led to add to classical learning a great knowledge of modern affairs and the habits of serious political thought about their own time.[6]

their whole country desolated by Spanish troops, and every town lighted up daily with the fires of persecution,—when I see the accounts of what passed when the envoys came to Queen Elizabeth and asked for aid, how she is huckstering for money while they are begging for help to their religion, I declare that, with all my principles of non-intervention, I am almost ashamed of old Queen Bess. And then there were Burleigh, Walsingham, and the rest, who were, if possible, harder and more difficult to deal with than their mistress. Why, they carried out in its unvarnished selfishness a national British policy; they had no other idea of a policy but a national British policy, and they carried it out with a degree of selfishness amounting to downright avarice.

"He next quotes Chatham. Do you suppose that Chatham was running about the world protecting and looking after other people's affairs? Why, he went abroad in the spirit of a commercial traveller more than any Minister we ever had. . . . . At that time, Lord Chatham thought, that by making war upon France and seizing the Canadas, he was bringing custom to the English merchants and manufacturers; and he publicly declared that he made those conquests for the very purpose of giving a monopoly of those conquered markets to Englishmen at home; and he said he would not allow the colonists to manufacture a horseshoe for themselves. . . . . Now, if I take Chatham's great son; if I take the second Pitt, when he entered upon wars he immediately began the conquest of colonies. When he entered upon war with France in 1793, and for three or four years afterwards, our navy was employed in little else than seizing colonies, the islands of the West Indies, &c., whether they belonged to France, Holland, or Denmark, or other nations, and he believed by that means he could make war profitable. —*Speeches*, ii. 350, 351.

[6] The passage was prompted by a little slip in a leading article in the *Times*, which had made one of the greatest of American rivers run uphill a great number of miles into another river, and then these two united (the waters of which are never blended at all) were made to flow into a third river, into which, as it happens, neither of them pours a drop. How preposterous, said Cobden, that young gentlemen who know all about the geography of ancient Greece, should be unable, if asked to point out Chicago on the map, to go within a thousand miles of it. "When I was at Athens," he said, "I sallied out one summer morning to see the far-famed river, the Ilyssus, and after walking for some hundred yards up what appeared to be the bed of a winter torrent, I came up to a number of Athenian laundresses, and I found they had dammed up this far-famed

His own industry in acquiring the knowledge that was necessary for his purpose was enormous. His pamphlets show his appetite for blue-books, and as with other sensible men it was an appetite which led him not merely to swallow but to digest and assimilate. He was a constant student of *Hansard*, and for one who seeks for purposes of action or controversy to make himself well versed in the political transactions of the present century, there is no book so well worth the labour of ransacking. Cobden was never afraid of labour that he thought would be useful; he cheerfully undertook even the drudgery of translation, and that too in a case where he did not in his heart expect to make any important mark on opinion.[7]

People have often wondered how it was that a man who showed so remarkable a capacity for understanding public business, should have made so little of a success of his own affairs. The same question might be asked of Burke and of Pitt, both of them economists and financiers of the first order, yet both of whom allowed their private affairs to fall into embarrassment and ruin. One obvious answer is that their minds were too much absorbed in public interests to have any room left for that close attention to private interests which must always be required to raise a poor man into prosperity. Cobden, it is true, deliberately attempted material success, and did not attempt it with prudence. The failure was in fact due to the very qualities which made him successful in larger affairs. His penetration shows to a man of this kind ways in which money may be

classic river, and that they were using every drop of water for their linen and such sanitary purposes. I say, why should not the young gentlemen who are taught all about the geography of the Ilyssus know something about the geography of the Mississippi, the Ohio, and the Missouri?"—*Speeches*, ii. 364.

[7] In 1858 he translated M. Chevalier's pamphlet on Gold.

made, and his energy naturally incites him to try to make it. Cobden was penetrating, energetic, and sanguine. "The records of unfortunate commerce," as Mr. Bagehot said, "abound in instances of men who have been unsuccessful, because they had great mind, great energy, and great hope, but had not money in proportion."[1]

One obvious criticism on Cobden's work, and it has often been made, is that he was expecting the arrival of a great social reform from the mere increase and more equal distribution of material wealth. He ought to have known, they say, that what our society needs is the diffusion of intellectual light and the fire of a higher morality. It is even said by some that Free Trade has done harm rather than good, because it has flooded the country with wealth which men have never been properly taught how to use. In other words, material progress has been out of all proportion to moral progress.

Now nobody had better reason to know this than Cobden. The perpetual chagrin of his life was the obstinate refusal of those on whom he had helped to shower wealth and plenty to hear what he had to say on the social ideals to which their wealth should lead. At last he was obliged to say to himself, as he wrote to a friend: "Nations have not yet learnt to bear prosperity, liberty, and peace. They will learn it in a higher state of civilization. We think we are the models for posterity, when we are little better than beacons to help it to avoid the rocks and quicksands."

"When I come here," he wrote to Mr. Hargreaves from Dunford, "to ramble alone in the fields and to think, I am impressed with the aspect of our political and social relations. We have the spirit of feudalism rife and rampant in the

[1] Bagehot's *Literary Studies*, vol. i. 373—a passage as applicable to Cobden as to Mr. Wilson, about whom it is written.

midst of the antagonistic development of the age of Watt, Arkwright, and Stephenson! Nay, feudalism is every day more and more in the ascendant in political and social life. So great is its power and prestige that it draws to it the support and homage of even those who are the natural leaders of the newer and better civilization. Manufacturers and merchants as a rule seem only to desire riches that they may be enabled to prostrate themselves at the feet of feudalism. How is this to end? And whither are we tending in both our domestic and foreign relations? Can we hope to avoid collisions at home or wars abroad whilst all the tendencies are to throw power and influence into the wrong scale?"[a]

He had begun life with the idea that the great manufacturers and merchants of England should aspire to that high directing position which had raised the Medici, the Fuggers, and the De Witts to a level with the sovereign princes of the earth.[1] At the end he still thought that no other class possessed wealth and influence enough to counteract the feudal class.[2] Through all his public course Cobden did his best to moralize this great class; to raise its self-respect and its consciousness of its own dignity and power. Like every one else, he could only work within his own limits. It is too soon yet to say how our feudal society will ultimately be recast. So far, plutocracy shows a very slight gain upon aristocracy, of which it remains, as Cobden so constantly deplored, an imitation, and a very bad imitation. The political exclusiveness of the oligarchy has been thoroughly broken down since Cobden's day. It seems, however, as if the preponderance of power were inevitably destined not for the middle class, as he believed, but for the workmen.

For this future *régime* Cobden's work was the best pre-

[a] *To Mr. Hargreaves*, April 10, 1863.

[1] See vol. i., p. 134.

[2] See above, p. 396.

paration. He conceived a certain measure of material prosperity, generally diffused, to be an indispensable instrument of social well-being. For England, as with admirable foresight he laid down in his first pamphlet in 1835, the cardinal fact is the existence of the United States—its industrial competition and its democratic example. This has transformed the conditions of policy. This is what warns English statesmen to set their house in order. For a country in our position, to keep the standard of living at its right level, free access to the means of subsistence and the material of industry was the first essential. Thrift in government and wise administration of private capital have become equally momentous in presence of the rising world around us. To abstain from intervention in the affairs of other nations is not only recommended by economic prudence, but is the only condition on which proper attention can be paid to the moral and social necessities at home. Let us not, then, tax Cobden with failing to do the work of the social moralist. It is his policy which gives to the social reformer a foothold. He accepted the task which, from the special requirements of the time, it fell to him to do, and it is both unjust and ungrateful to call him narrow for not performing the tasks of others as well as his own.

It was his view of policy as a whole, connected with the movement of wealth and industry all over the world, that distinguished Cobden and his allies from the Philosophic Radicals, who had been expected to form so great and powerful a school in the reformed Parliament.[a] Hume had anticipated him in attacking expenditure, and Mr. Roebuck in preaching self-government in the colonies. It was not until Retrenchment and Colonial Policy were

[a] See Mr. Mill's *Autobiography*, 194—196.

placed in their true relation to the new and vast expansion of commerce and the growth of population, that any considerable number of people accepted them. The Radical party only became effective when it had connected its principles with economic facts. The different points of view of the Manchester School and of the Philosophic Radicals was illustrated in Mr. Mill's opposition to the alterations which Cobden had advocated in international maritime law. Mr. Mill argued that the best way of stopping wars is to make them as onerous as possible to the citizens of the country concerned, and therefore that to protect the goods of the merchants of a belligerent country is to give them one motive the less for hindering their Government from making war. With all reverence for the ever admirable author of this argument, it must be pronounced to be abstract and unreal, when compared with Cobden's. You are not likely to prevent the practice of war, he contended, but what you can do is to make it less destructive to the interests and the security of great populations. An argument of this kind rests on a more solid basis, and suggests a wider comprehension of actual facts. In the same way he translated the revolutionary watchword of the Fraternity of Peoples into the language of common sense and practice, and the international sentiment as interpreted by him became an instrument for preserving as well as improving European order. He was justified in regarding his principles as the true Conservatism of modern societies.

Great economic and social forces flow with a tidal sweep over communities that are only half-conscious of that which is befalling them. Wise statesmen are those who foresee what time is thus bringing, and endeavour to shape institutions and to mould men's thought and purpose

in accordance with the change that is silently surrounding them. To this type Cobden by his character and his influence belonged. Hence, amid the coarse strife and blind passion of the casual factions of the day, his name will stand conspicuously out as a good servant of the Commonwealth, and be long held in grateful memory.

APPENDIX.

Note A. (See p. 115).

Cobden to W. C. Hunt on the Hours of Labour.

Falmouth, Oct. 21, 1836.

" . . . . When upon the point of embarking on board the *Liverpool* steamer for Lisbon, a thought has occurred to me relative to the address which I left with you for the Stockport electors, and which induces me to trouble you with this letter. I have altogether omitted to advert to the Ten Hours Bill; and as it is a question that interests deeply the non-electors, whose influence, I am aware, is very considerable in your borough, I might be considered to have wilfully and designedly suppressed all allusion to the subject, if I did not explain my opinions unreservedly upon it. As respects the right and justice by which young persons ought to be protected from excessive labour, my mind has ever been decided, and I will not argue the matter for a moment with political economy; it is a question for the medical and not the economical profession; I will appeal to —— or Astley Cooper, and not to MacCulloch or Martineau. Nor does it require the aid of science to inform us that the tender germ of childhood is unfitted for that period of labour which even persons of mature age shrink from as excessive. In my opinion, and I hope to see the day when such a feeling is universal, *no child ought to be put to work in a cotton-mill at all so early as the age of thirteen years;* and after that the

hours should be moderate, and the labour light, until such time as the human frame is rendered by nature capable of enduring the fatigues of adult labour. With such feelings as these strongly pervading my mind, I need not perhaps add that, had I been in the House of Commons during the last session of Parliament, I should have opposed, with all my might Mr. Poulett Thomson's measure for postponing the operation of the clause for restricting the hours of infant labour. I am aware that many of the advocates of the cause of the factory children are in favour of a Ten Hours Bill for restricting the working of the engines, which in fact would be to limit the use of steam in all cotton establishments (for young persons are, I believe, at present employed in every branch of our staple manufacture, more or less) to ten hours a day. It has always, however, appeared to me that those who are in favour of this policy lose sight of the very important consequences which are involved in the principle. Have they considered that it would be the first example of a legislature of a free country interfering with the freedom of adult labour? Have they reflected that if we surrender into the hands of Government the power to make laws to fix the hours of labour at all, it has as good a right, upon the same principle, to make twenty hours the standard as ten? Have they taken into account that if the spinners and weavers are to be protected by Act of Parliament, then the thousand other mechanical and laborious trades must in justice have their claims attended to by the same tribunal? I believe it is now nearly three hundred years ago since laws were last enforced which regulated or interfered with the labour of the working classes. They were the relics of the feudal ages, and to escape from the operation of such a species of legislation was considered as a transition from a state of slavery to that of freedom. Now it appears to me, however unconscious the advocates of such a policy may be of such

consequences, that if we admit the right of the Government to settle the hours of labour, we are in principle going back again to that point from which our ancestors escaped three centuries ago. Let not the people—I mean the masses—think lightly of those great principles upon which their strength wholly rests. The privileged and usurping few may advocate expediency in lieu of principles, but depend upon it we, reformers, must cling to first principles, and be prepared to carry them out, fearless of consequences. Am I told that the industrious classes in Lancashire are incapable of protecting themselves from oppression unless by the shield of the legislature? I am loath to believe it. Nay, as I am opposed to the plan of legislating upon such a subject, I am bound to suggest another remedy. *I would, then advise the working classes to make themselves free of the labour market of the world, and this they can do by accumulating twenty pounds each,* which will give them the command of the only market in which labour is at a higher rate than in England—I mean that of the UNITED STATES. If every working man would save this sum, he might be as independent of his employer as the latter, with his great capital, is of his workmen. Were this universal, we should hear no more of the tyranny of the employers. If I am told that my scheme is chimerical because the working classes cannot depend upon each other, I answer that I have better hopes of them, and I look forward to many other improvements of a similar kind. All that is required, in my opinion, is that the operatives understand their own interests, and be not put upon a false scent; let them trust only to themselves, and not depend upon the legislature, which will never avail them. I yield to no man in the world (be he ever so stout an advocate of the Ten Hours Bill) in a hearty good-will towards the great body of the working classes; but my sympathy is not of that morbid kind which would

lead me to despond over their future prospects. Nor do I partake of that spurious humanity, which would indulge in an unreasoning kind of philanthropy at the expense of the independence of the great bulk of the community. Mine is that masculine species of charity which would lead me to inculcate in the minds of the labouring classes, the love of independence, the privilege of self-respect, the disdain of being patronized or petted, the desire to accumulate, and the ambition to rise. I know it has been found easier to please the people by holding out flattering and delusive prospects of cheap benefits to be derived from Parliament, rather than by urging them to a course of self-reliance; but while I will not be the sycophant of the great, I cannot become the parasite of the poor; and I have sufficient confidence in the growing intelligence of the working classes to be induced to believe that they will now be found to contain a great proportion of minds, sufficiently enlightened by experience to concur with me in opinion that it is to themselves alone individually, that they, as well as every other great section of the community, must trust for working out their own regeneration and happiness. Again I say to them, '*Look not to Parliament, look only to yourselves.*'

"It would be easy for me to state reasons of a different description why the legislature ought not to be suffered to interfere with the freedom of the labour of the people. How very obvious, however, must it be that any law restricting the hours of labour would be inoperative so soon as it became the interest of masters and workmen to violate it! Where, then, would be the utility or wisdom of an enactment which owed its power entirely to the free will of the parties whom it professed to coerce? Surely they might act as effectually without the necessity of infringing and merely bringing into disrepute the law of the land! But it is impossible to pursue the question to the extent of

its merits within the limits of a sheet of letter-paper. If I am told by the advocates of a Ten Hours Bill that the plan of putting a restriction upon the moving power is the only way of saving the infants from destruction, to what a sad point does this argument conduct us! It is, in fact, an avowal that the parents cannot be trusted to obey a law which forbids them to sacrifice their offspring. Against this lamentable aspersion upon the natural affection of the working classes I enter my solemn protest. I believe, on the contrary, that public opinion amongst them is sufficiently patent to prevent an unnatural connivance of the kind on the part of any considerable number of parents; and I am convinced that the morality of the people is rapidly advancing to that elevated standard which will very soon preclude the apprehension that any individual of this body will be found sufficiently depraved to be suspected of the guilt of infanticide."

FULL TEXT OF THE LAST LETTER WRITTEN BY MR COBDEN.

23 SUFFOLK STREET, PALL MALL,
LONDON, 22nd *March*, 1865.

MY DEAR POTTER,

I return Mill's letter.—Everything from him is entitled to respectful consideration—but I confess, after the best attention to the proposed representation of minorities which I can give it, I am so stupid as to fail to see its merits. He speaks of 50,000 electors having to elect five members, and that 30,000 may elect them all, and to obviate this he would give the 20,000 minority two votes, but I would give only one vote to each elector, and one representative to each constituency. Instead of the 50,000 returning five in a lump, I would have five constituencies of 10,000, each returning one member. Thus, if the Metropolis, for example, were entitled with a fair distribution of electoral power, to forty votes, I would divide it into forty districts or wards, each to return one member, and in this way every class and every variety of opinion would have a chance of a fair representation—Belgravia, Marylebone, St James's, St Giles's, Whitechapel, Spitalfields, etc. would each and all have their members. I don't know any better plan for giving all opinions a chance of being heard, and, after all, it is opinions that are to be represented. If the minority have a faith that their opinions, and not those of the majority, are the true ones, then let them agitate and discuss until their principles are in the ascendant. This is the motive for political action and the healthy agitation of public life. I do not like to recognise the necessity of dealing with working men as a class in an extension of the franchise. The small shopkeeper and the artisan of the towns are socially on a level. The subject is, however, too large for a sheet of notepaper.

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

(Sgd.) R. COBDEN.

THOS. B. POTTER, Esq.

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